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MEMORY IN THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF ST. AUGUSTINE:

"IN MEMORIA EST COGITANDI MODUS"

Paige Evelyn Hochschild, B.A., M.A.

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MEMORY IN THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF ST. AUGUSTINE:

“*IN MEMORIA EST COGITANDI MODUS*”

PAIGE EVELYN HOCHSCHILD

The place of memory in the theological anthropology of St. Augustine has its roots in the platonic epistemological tradition. Augustine actively engages with this tradition in his early writings in a manner that is both philosophically sophisticated and doctrinally consistent with his later, more overtly theological, writings. From the Cassiciacum dialogues through *De musica*, Augustine points to the central importance of memory: he examines this power of the soul as something that mediates sense-perception and understanding, while explicitly deferring a more profound treatment of it until *Confessiones* and *De trinitate*. In these two texts, memory is the foundation for the location of the *imago Dei* in the mind. It becomes the basis for the spiritual experience of the embodied creature, and a source of the profound anxiety that results from the sensed opposition of human time and divine time (*aeterna ratio*). This tension is contained and resolved, to a limited extent, in Augustine's christology, in the ability of a paradoxical incarnation to unify the temporal and the eternal (in *Confessions* 11 and 12), and the life of faith (*scientia*) with the promised contemplation of the divine (*sapientia*, in *De trinitate* 12-14).

DECLARATION

No material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES OF AUGUSTINE'S WORKS

<i>Acad.</i>	<i>De Academicis libri tres</i>
<i>an. et or.</i>	<i>De anima et eius origine libri quattuor</i>
<i>an. quant.</i>	<i>De animae quantitate liber unus</i>
<i>beata u.</i>	<i>De beata uita liber unus</i>
<i>cat. rud.</i>	<i>De cathecizandis rudibus liber unus</i>
<i>ciu.</i>	<i>De ciuitate dei libri viginti duo</i>
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessionum libri tredecim</i>
<i>cons. eu.</i>	<i>De consensu euangelistarum libri quattuor</i>
<i>dial.</i>	<i>De dialectica</i>
<i>diu. qu.</i>	<i>De diuersis quaestionibus octoginta tribus liber unus</i>
<i>doctr. chr.</i>	<i>De doctrina christiana libri quattuor</i>
<i>duab. an</i>	<i>De duabus animabus liber unus</i>
<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>Ennarationes in Psalmos</i>
<i>ench.</i>	<i>De fide spe et caritate liber unus</i>
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>ep. Io. tr.</i>	<i>In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus Decem</i>
<i>ep. Rm. inch.</i>	<i>Epistulae ad Romanos inchoata expositio liber unus</i>
<i>f. et symb.</i>	<i>De fide et symbolo liber unus</i>
<i>f. inuis.</i>	<i>De fide rerum inuisibilium</i>
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim</i>
<i>Gn. litt. inp.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus</i>
<i>gramm.</i>	<i>De grammatica</i>
<i>imm. an.</i>	<i>De immortalitate animae liber unus</i>
<i>Io. eu. tr.</i>	<i>In Iohannis euangelium tractatus CXXIV</i>
<i>lib. arb.</i>	<i>De libero arbitrio libri tres</i>
<i>mag.</i>	<i>De magistro liber unus</i>
<i>mus.</i>	<i>De musica libri sex</i>
<i>nat. b.</i>	<i>De natura boni liber unus</i>
<i>ord.</i>	<i>De ordine libri duo</i>
<i>orig. an.</i>	<i>De origine animae (= ep. 166)</i>
<i>retr.</i>	<i>Retractationum libri duo</i>
<i>rhet.</i>	<i>De rethorica</i>
<i>s.</i>	<i>Sermones</i>
<i>Simpl.</i>	<i>Ad Simplicianum libri duo</i>
<i>sol.</i>	<i>Soliloquiorum libri duo</i>
<i>trin.</i>	<i>De trinitate libri quindecim</i>
<i>uera rel.</i>	<i>De uera religione liber unus</i>
<i>util. cred.</i>	<i>De utilitate credendi liber unus</i>

INTRODUCTION

For Augustine, it is through memory that mind meets the world. Present perception of things outside the body are intelligently apprehended by means of memory; the understanding of intellectual objects, even the mind itself, occurs through the mediation of memory. Most importantly, memory is at the heart of what it means to be constituted in the image of God. It declares a fundamental relatedness of what is changing to what is unchanging, and in this relation we find the fulfillment of what it means to be human.

Memory is of course only one part of the human triad of memory, understanding and will (or love), and must be seen in the end as inextricably linked with these.¹ This means that mind meets the world in a manner that is orderly—both as bringing an order to nature that is not obvious to the senses, and as bringing to light a providential order that is implicit in the sensible—and in a manner that is ideally intentional and deliberate. “The bounds of thought (*cogitandi modus*) are in the memory”, Augustine writes.² When memory is seen as a *habitus*, it is the intentionality of the intellect. Memory is indeed receptive to the world, but it is also a tool for the mind to sift through the data of sense-perception by bringing to light, and even imposing, *modus* and *ordo*.

¹ *Trin.* 10.11.17-18.

² *Ibid.* “Memory is the mind’s eye formed or directed in a certain way. When Augustine speculates on the connection between memory, understanding and will, he sees them as aspects of a single substance, the mind (*mens*). The category of relation is appropriate. Just as understanding is understanding of something and will is will to effect something, so too memory is memory of something: the terms, the activities to which they refer, cannot be understood in an absolute sense, as can ‘substance’ or ‘life’ or even ‘mind’.... Memory is indeed the mind, but engaged in certain pursuits, directed in a certain way and in relation to certain objects.” O’Daly (1987), pp. 135-136.

Although the mind cannot be reduced to memory solely, memory is clearly the basis for a phenomenology of embodied life. This dissertation begins within the discipline of philosophical psychology. The first part considers the thinking of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus on memory and its relation to sense-perception and understanding. In this, we wish to observe that Augustine's own reflections occur within a context of rich philosophical reflection on this topic. We are not arguing in any new manner for direct textual influences, but rather observing the offerings of a tradition that Augustine considered authoritative, even when it was received through an eclectic variety of reported sources. Although Plotinus alone takes memory not merely as a psychological category, but as a spiritual *habitus*, in the end we find Augustine more at home with Aristotelian epistemology, and the mature reflections of Plato on the nature of dialectic.³ On the other hand, the first

³ An important but deliberate omission should be explained at this point. It is quite true that memory has a significant place in the Latin rhetorical tradition, but we shall deliberately neglect this tradition as peripheral to our study. It is possible to overstate the *philosophical* influence of Cicero upon Augustine. According to Cicero, it was Simonides of Ceos who invented the "mnemonic art of memory" (*De oratore* 2.86); Plato, in *Phaedrus*, scorns this technique of remembering as "sense-memory without understanding." Cicero is indeed mainly interested in artificial memory (as distinct from natural memory), the rules and techniques that an orator might use for the recollection of images. Augustine however would not share Plato's harsh estimation of the value of memory in this sense. For Cicero, memory is also a part of prudence (*De inventione* 2.53.159). The orator is the *teacher* of history, and the instructor of citizens in virtuous behaviour; in order to be effective, he must be mindful both of the character of his hearers, and of the subject matter upon which he draws. Augustine clearly has Cicero in mind in the fourth book of *doctr. chr.* (4.5.8), when he insists upon the right use of the rhetorical arts. We shall also observe an influence in the conception of a developed "habit" of memory, although for Augustine this has the distinct sense of a "mindfulness" of God. This idea has a more likely influence from Plotinus' thinking on memory. Cicero's influence is limited by his own lack of interest in the anthropological and epistemological conditions for remembering; this is widely manifest in the *Tusculan Disputations*, where he speaks of memory as a power of the divine mind without any attempt at explanation or inquiry. Excellent work has been done on the influence of Cicero and Seneca on Augustine; for the purposes of a study of theological anthropology, this is relevant, but secondary. See Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), p. 13, p. 41; John Cavadini, "The Sweetness of the Word: Salvation and Rhetoric in Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*", in *De doctrina christiana: A Classic of Western Culture*, Duane Arnold and Pamela Bright, eds. (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1995), p. 165; on Cicero's philosophical import, see Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*, 2 vols. (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1986), Vol. 1, pp. 119-154.

part of the dissertation also invites an increased wonder at precisely the originality of the central import of memory in Augustine's writings.

The second part of the dissertation begins with *contra academicos* and ends with *de musica*. Initially, memory arises as a topic here and there, but is deliberately deferred as requiring further examination at a later date. Augustine shows himself to be engaged with the epistemological issues surrounding memory and sense-perception, as raised in the first part. The larger goal of these texts, however, is very different, and it is our primary task to observe the contexts in which memory becomes important: intellectual illumination in *soliloquia*, providence in creation in *de ordine*, the intelligence of sense-perception and the ability of signs to instruct in *de magistro* and *de musica*. *De musica* concludes with number as the fundamental principle of creation, since number is an idea that can mediate oneness and multiplicity. It is the recognized need for mediation in creation—as well as a parallel mediation in the union of soul and body in man—that is the fruit of these early writings, and which links the second part to the third part.

Our analysis of *confessiones* 11 and 12 forms the core of the dissertation. We begin with Book 10, the first half of which is generally considered the classic “textbook” on what Augustine says about memory. This approach is inadequate, however, because this text on its own does not tell us why it is important that Augustine seeks after God within the scope of memory. Book 10 does however show how memory becomes the basis for the spiritual anxiety that frames the Christian *via*, and it offers the Incarnation as an enigmatic response to this problematic. We show how Books 11 and 12 develop this response. Finally, we turn to *de trinitate*, focussing on Books 12-14, in which the dichotomy *scientia-*

sapientia parallels that of temporal-eternal developed both in *conf.* and *trin.* This dichotomy explains the foundational place of the image-trinity of memory, understanding and will, and the incarnational response to the spiritual *distractio* of the embodied life.

This study therefore intends to contribute to a picture of what an Augustinian “theory of knowledge” might look like. As such, it addresses the absence of any book-length study on the topic.⁴ Most articles or monographs that mention memory do so in an abstract manner that is not attentive to the context of Augustine’s own writing. Our method is therefore appropriately historical, and largely exegetical. It is primarily concerned with what is said in a particular place about memory, but ultimately has as its goal the illumination of the larger argument of texts. There is no intent to reduce rich and many-layered passages simply to memory and its importance. However, the neglected significance of memory as the foundation for Augustine’s anthropology is justly brought to light.

Theological anthropology is therefore where this essay ends, and not with a theory of knowledge. For Augustine, memory delineates the inescapable conditions of embodied life: here the Incarnation offers a hope of mediation, and therefore transcendence. But the central place of the Incarnation in Augustine’s theology of creation requires him to see what might be limitation to Plotinus rather as a *via*, and as a reason for hope, for the Christian thinker. In *conf.* 10, Augustine observes that all people desire happiness, and supremely, the happiness of the blessed life. But from what experience have they come to know what this happiness might look like, such that they can desire it, given that they have never

⁴ The most “classic” secondary work on Augustine’s use of memory is found in the Notes Complémentaires of the volumes from the Bibliothèque Augustinienne, especially those of A. Solignac for *Confessions*, Vols. 13 & 14 (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris, 1962). See *infra* for further references.

possessed it?⁵ Christ as the *verax mediator* is indeed an answer to this question, as developed in Books 12 and 13: God moves the intellect and will through the knowledge that comes through the memory. The universal, for Augustine, can only be perceived through the particular. This must therefore happen through history, through the visible, sensible works of Christ, through the practice of the virtues, the love of one's neighbour, the life of the Church, its sacraments, and above all its scripture. From these experiences, a person has an intimation of what the happiness of the *caelum caeli* consists in. The temporal healing of faith transforms the *distractio* of memory into the *intentio* of *meditatio*. The continuity of faith is guaranteed by the continuity of memory in the life of the resurrected body.⁶ This continuity in turn confirms our thesis concerning the practical implications of memory at the heart of the nature of man.

⁵ *Conf.* 10.20.29. O'Daly (1987, pp. 205-207) wrongly thinks this question unanswered.

⁶ *Trin.* 14.2.4-14.3.5.

PART I:
PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION

CHAPTER 1:

PLATO

There is a general consensus that Augustine read some Platonic dialogues: Cicero's translation of *Timaeus* and parts of *Republic*, translations of *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*.¹ Much of this may have come to him through the mediation of Stoic and Middle Platonic sources, and particularly through doxographies.² A direct, though selective, influence of Plotinus upon Augustine is, in my opinion, more transparent. While Augustine claims a kinship with Platonism at various stages in his career, when reading Plato, one is deeply aware of the great difference between their respective intellectual universes, both in terms of philosophical style and religious spirit. So much scholarly ink has been spilled over the nature of the *libri Platoniorum* so famously mentioned in *conf.* 7.9. The context is often overlooked, for this passage speaks of the "monstrous pride" of the one who delivered these books to Augustine.³

Nevertheless, to "Platonism" in general Augustine attributes his freedom from philosophical materialism and, related to this, a conception of evil as a privation of the Good.⁴ Though free from this particular error (*falsum*), Augustine describes himself as weighed down by the "habit of the flesh" ("*pondus... consuetudo carnalis*"). The body itself and its wayward inclinations are clearly

¹ See the entry on "Platonism" by Frederick Van Fleteren in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), pp. 651-654.

² A. Solignac, "Doxographies et manuels dans la formation philosophique de saint Augustin", *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (Etudes Augustiniennes: Paris, 1958), pp. 113-148.

³ On the *libri Platoniorum*, see *infra*. For an historical account of scholarship on this question, see C. Starnes, *Augustine's Conversion* (Wilfred Laurier University Press: Waterloo, 1990), pp. 202-203.

⁴ See *conf.* 7.9-17.

distinguished, the one good by nature and the other fundamentally flawed; and yet their close relationship will give rise to ideas and problems discussed later in this section. It is primarily our intention in this section to consider the influence of Plato on Augustine's conception of memory in the context of basic issues of sense-perception and body-soul dualism. We will argue for a direct thematic influence with respect to memory, as well as significant, indirect parallels (for example, in Plato's understanding of the role of sense-perception in dialectic).

As to recollection in particular, and the nature of memory, the most explicit reference to Plato made by Augustine is found in *trin.* 12.15.24. Even this is a curious passage, however, since Augustine is rejecting only a particular aspect of the doctrine of recollection, namely, the implication of pre-existence and reincarnation.⁵ In its place, he suggests an ontology of illumination. The connection between memory and illumination is also developed in *conf.* 10. Whether that connection actually has a source in Plato's texts will be considered.

The greatest difficulty in looking for echoes of Plato in Augustine lies in the challenge of the Platonic texts themselves. It is very difficult to extract "doctrines" from the Platonic dialogues while being sensitive to the larger context of the work. We are not aided by the fact that much modern scholarship on Plato rejects the "doctrine of recollection" as having much explanatory power or philosophical usefulness.⁶ Moreover, Plato's dialogues clearly manifest a development in his thinking, especially with respect to larger ontological questions about the nature of the forms and their relation to the sensible things of

⁵ Plato has Socrates insist that he need not maintain every aspect of the story of the disembodied immortal soul (*Phaedo* 114d).

⁶ See, for example, Gail Fine, "Inquiry in the *Meno*", in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), pp. 200-226; Dominic Scott, "Platonic Recollection", in *Plato: Oxford Readings in Philosophy*, Vol. 1 (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1999), pp. 93-124.

which they are the forms. While the *Timaeus* is not the last word on this subject, it nevertheless tends to cast a shadow over the rest of the later dialogues because of its deeply influential role in post-hellenistic and early medieval thought.⁷

Toward the end of his life, the characters in Plato's dialogues speak with less authority and finality about crucial matters of ontology. Interpretive issues arise prior to any discussion of an epistemological or psychological nature. We will point to these issues at the conclusion to the first part of this section.

With these concerns in mind, we will attempt to sketch a picture of sense-perception and memory in Plato's writings, staying closer to the texts Augustine is thought to have read. Thus we will look mainly at parts of *Philebus*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic*; parts of *Timaeus* will be particularly considered, and only briefly, *Meno*. We will refer to other dialogues chiefly when they illuminate what is found in these. The later dialogues will enter into play only to provide a richer sense of a Platonic teaching on the nature of dialectic as philosophical practice. These chapters on philosophical sources are circumscribed in scope by a mindfulness of the specific debt attributed to Platonism by Augustine⁸, and by the epistemological issues orbiting the topic of memory in the early dialogues.

A "mythological theory" of soul

A picture of Plato's understanding of the nature of the tripartite soul can be drawn from parts of *Republic*, especially Book 4, *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*. This aspect of Plato's teaching is held to be of little account by modern scholars of

⁷ See discussions on the place of *Timaeus* in the Platonic corpus in "The relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's later dialogues", H.F. Cherniss in *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*, R.E. Allen, ed. (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1965); see also "The place of the *Timaeus* in Plato's dialogues", by G.E.L. Owen in the same volume.

⁸ In *conf.* 7.

Plato, occasionally dismissed as merely “mythological” or religious, and hardly consistent with the rest of his writings. It is however the abiding image to which Plato returns, and it originates his most poignant reflections on the relation of soul and body.⁹ It is very likely that Augustine encountered this image in more than one text.

In *Republic* 4, the soul is described as having three “parts”, the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive.¹⁰ Plato does not describe these merely as aspects of the soul, but as veritable and distinct “forms” that are “actually existing.”¹¹ In Book 10 he allows that the composite nature of the soul would seem to compromise his argument for its immortality, and he responds by saying that soul in its essential nature is simple and pure. It is only by virtue of its relationship with body that it becomes varied, says Plato.¹² Its simplicity is attributed to its highest part: the divisions are real, and not merely a function of the soul’s operations. *Timaeus*, a later dialogue, essentially confirms this explanation of the tripartite structure of the soul, and consequently the immortality of only the highest, rational part of the soul.¹³

Guthrie argues that while the dividedness of the soul is associated with the body, it is not actually *caused* by the body.¹⁴ He points to a shift away from

⁹ Consider the ordering of the articles in the “Modern Studies in Philosophy” volumes on Plato. Relegated to the small, dusty section at the end of the second volume on “Religion” are two of the best essays on Platonic epistemology: E.R. Dodds, “Plato and the Irrational Soul” (pp. 206-229), and W.K.C. Guthrie, “Plato’s Views on the Nature of the Soul” (pp. 230-243) (ed. Gregory Vlastos (Doubleday: New York, 1971)).

¹⁰ 439d-e (*logistikon, epithumetikon, thumoides*).

¹¹ The English translation we are using is that of Paul Shorey in the *Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1961), originally printed in the Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1930).

¹² 611a-d. This way of speaking will be powerfully echoed by Plotinus and Christian writers, such as Origen, influenced by the early Neoplatonic tradition.

¹³ 44d and 90a-b.

¹⁴ Cf. art. cit., pp. 234-236.

proving the immortality of the soul from simplicity of nature, to a proof based on the self-moving capacity of the soul in *Phaedrus*.¹⁵ Plato there uses an image to describe the nature of the soul that qualifies the hierarchical picture that we have sketched.

(The soul is) likened to the union of powers in a team of winged steeds and their winged charioteer. Now all the gods' steeds and all their charioteers are good, and of good stock, but with other beings it is not so... (Of the steeds,) one of them is noble and good, and of good stock, while the other has the opposite character.... Hence the task of the charioteer is difficult and troublesome.¹⁶

We have the three elements of the soul in a simile. Guthrie notes that both gods and men have tripartite souls and that the souls of men destined for bodies already have all three parts in place. What differs is not the structure of the soul, but the character of the lower parts. The souls that are caught in the earthly cycle of reincarnation, which have not yet attained philosophical wisdom, are subject to unruly impulses. In the end, Plato does not indicate a dissolution or loss of the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul, but rather that they be exercised and mastered by the highest part of the soul, which is mind. As Aristotle and Plotinus will agree, it is life according to *nous* that brings peace to the whole person. Body *per se* is not really the problem for the soul; it is a means to an end, the end of the liberation of the mind.

Sense-perception

In *Republic* 6 (511d-e), Plato offers a division in the parts of knowledge; literally, they are affections (*pathemata*) or operations of the soul: intellection (*noesis*), discursive reasoning (*dianoia*), belief (*pistis*) and image-making

¹⁵ 245c-246e.

¹⁶ 246b.

(*eikasia*).¹⁷ The latter two are proper to the realm of what is sensible, or “visible.”

Since the physical world is constantly changing, it cannot be a stable ground for knowledge. The first two divisions pertain to the knowledge of the forms. For Plato, there is no knowledge of sensible things; while there is such a thing as sense-perception, it cannot procure any reliable information about the world.

Thus, at *Phaedo* 65e-66a, Socrates says to Simmias:

Don't you think that the person who is likely to succeed in this attempt (i.e. at knowledge) most perfectly is the one who approaches each object, as far as possible, with the unaided intellect, without taking account of any sense of sight in his thinking, or dragging any other sense into his reckoning—the man who pursues the truth by applying his pure and unadulterated thought to the pure and unadulterated object, cutting himself off as much as possible from his eyes and ears and virtually all the rest of his body, as an impediment which by its presence prevents the soul from attaining to truth and clear thinking? Is not this the person, Simmias, who will reach the goal of reality, if anybody can?¹⁸

This passage makes it clear that what the body takes in by the senses can be a hindrance to true knowledge. The passage above from *Timaeus* raises the question of the morality, as it were, of sense-perception. The image of the cave from *Republic* 514b suggests that those who operate primarily within the scope of sense-perception are willfully bound in the darkness, mistaking transient images silhouetted on a wall for reality. The soul, according to *Phaedo*, must refrain from using the senses as much as possible, since their object is variable and deceptive. The same is the case for emotions, such as pleasure or pain. It is “chiefly visible things” that have deceptive influences, for the soul falsely takes an impression to be true, which in turn gives rise to an emotional effect—even though we are often

¹⁷ The fourth word, *eikasia*, is difficult to translate because it is rarely used in classical Greek; various translators render it as “imagination”, “conjecture”, “picture thinking” or “illusion.”

¹⁸ Trans. Hugh Tredennick.

mistaken, thinking that what is truly real is the cause of emotional reactions.

Thus,

Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over his soul is a helpless prisoner, chained hand and foot in the body, compelled to view reality not directly but through its prison bars, and wallowing in utter ignorance. And philosophy can see that the imprisonment is ingeniously effected by the prisoner's own active desire, which makes him first accessory to his own confinement. Well, philosophy takes over the soul in this condition and by gentle persuasion tries to set it free.¹⁹

The danger is that the images taken in through the senses will be mistaken for actual knowledge. Though the prisoner is helpless in his bonds, he is in a condition of his own making. It is only by the intervention of philosophy that he can be freed.

The picture of the tripartite soul from *Timaeus* is more positive. It is clear here that error can arise not simply from the willfully cultivated habits of the soul, but from the nature of sense-perception itself. Opinion marks the limit of sense-perception, and rectitude of opinion is accidental. What, then, is sense-perception, and of what use? And how does it pertain to belief and "image-making"? In *Theatetus*, the basis of the explanation is that the universe "really is motion and nothing else."²⁰ Motion can be considered in both an active and a passive sense: it would appear as though physical objects actively move upon the sense organs, while sense organs are moved in a passive, receptive way.²¹ The result of this two-fold motion is a perception and the thing perceived (156b). These two things "come to birth" at exactly the same time.

¹⁹ 82e-83a.

²⁰ 156a (trans. Francis M. Cornford), in *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (Macmillan Publishing Company: New York, 1957). This understanding of motion partially underlies Aristotle's conception of the distinction between active and passive.

²¹ 157b5 makes it difficult to move beyond the idea of the sensible as motion simply, to the extent of reifying a given "object" or "recipient organ", or granting priority to one or the other.

As soon, then, as an eye and something else whose structure is adjusted to the eye come within range and give birth to the whiteness together with its cognate perception... then it is that, as the vision from the eyes and the whiteness from the thing that joins in giving birth to the colour pass in the space in between, the eye becomes filled with vision and now sees and becomes, not vision, but a seeing eye; while the other parent of the colour is saturated with whiteness and becomes, on its side, not whiteness, but a white thing, be it stock or stone or whatever else may chance to be so coloured.²²

As Aristotle will agree, Plato concludes that sense-perception is infallible. Under normal circumstances, with the body functioning properly, the senses relay data reliably. Since the physical world is understood in terms of motion, Plato will accept to an extent Protagoras' maxim that "man is the measure of all things"—at least with respect to sense-perception.²³ Each perspective is unique, and therefore the "truth" of perception is relative to the perceiver. In *Timaeus* (45c-d), the process is described somewhat differently. According to the principle of the affinity of similar things, the light of day "coalesces" with the "stream" of vision; when this "affected stream" of vision encounters an object, the motions are "diffused" over the body of the one seeing, until they reach the soul, thereby causing sight. The important qualification of this later account is the location of dual causality in the light and in the seer, which makes sense-perception less passive than in *Theatetus*.

Theatetus and *Phaedo* do not provide us with a much more detailed picture than that. Plato seems more interested in distinguishing knowledge from sense-perception than in seriously investigating the latter.²⁴ However, we must add to

²² 156d-e.

²³ 160e-163a.

²⁴ This is Cornford's conclusion; however, the problem remains of the absence of any coherent, ontological or psychological basis for this explanation of sense-perception in *Theatetus*; cf. 186e.

this generally pessimistic account the perspective of the later *Timaeus*, one which Augustine certainly read, and in which we find a different tone altogether.

Sight, in my opinion, is the source of the greatest benefit to us, for had we never seen the stars and the sun and the heaven, none of the words which we have spoken about the universe would even have been uttered. But now the sight of day and night, and the months and the revolutions of the years have created number and have given us a conception of time, and the power of inquiring about the nature of the universe. And from this source we have derived philosophy, than which no greater good ever was or will be given by the gods to mortal man.... God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed, and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries. The same may be affirmed of speech and hearing.... [For] harmony, which has motions akin to the revolutions of our souls... is meant to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself, and rhythm too was given by them for the same reason, on account of the regular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally, and to help us against them.²⁵

This passage is part of the “creation” story of *Timaeus*, and Plato is clearly allowing that the eternal order of the forms—or, here, of the divine intelligence—can be perceived through the physical, created order. This realm, in *Timaeus*, is described as an imitation, and therefore an image, of the intelligible order (48e). He re-affirms the volatile nature of the physical, but he locates this volatility in the elements that constitute things, especially the “receptacle”, the unformed matrix of “all generation.” Nevertheless, motion here is not merely the endless flux of the sensible in *Theatetus*, but somehow the product of soul and the proof of its vitality.

²⁵ 47a-e (trans. Benjamin Jowett).

Knowledge as recollection in the early dialogues: Meno and Phaedo

Plato bridges the gulf between the sensible and the intelligible with his mature understanding of dialectic. In the earlier dialogues, however, a different model of knowledge predominates. The most important thing for Plato in these texts is the preservation of knowledge from sense-perception and its influences. The image of the divided line from *Republic* 4 mentioned above attributes error both to sense-perception and opinion. The firmness of the division between knowledge and opinion creates a problem in accounting for the acquisition of knowledge. The theory of recollection is intended to answer this problem, in that it establishes a relationship between the mind and some sort of “innate” principles or ideas. The familiar “learner’s paradox” of *Meno* asks how one can seek after knowledge unless one already has some sense of what it is that is sought after.²⁶ Recollection is supposed to provide an explanation for a direct apprehension of the forms.

Socrates offers an account of the role of recollection, but even he rejects the explanatory value of maintaining the pre-existence of the soul as a part of that account. In my opinion, Plato is ready to do this because he has said that recollection is simultaneously the rejection of the false impressions taken in by the senses, and the “realization” of the immediately available ideas. Both of these aspects suggest that the soul does not exist in a transcendent, supra-temporal state, as do the ideas. The limitation of the theory as presented in *Meno* lies in the fact that it only explains the former: what guarantee can there be that the soul, after having its false opinions removed, is not immediately occupied by opinions more false than the first? The pre-existence of the soul explains, in a mythological

²⁶-80c. This trope of the paradox of “seeking” persists throughout Augustine’s writings, even through to later, mature theological writings (e.g. *conf.* 1.1.1; *trin.* 15.28.51).

fashion, how the soul might have come to be in the body; but it is apparently not necessary in order to maintain recollection as a theory of learning. The idea of recollection establishes a necessary if unspecified relation to concepts in general, and demands that a methodology be established for the acquisition of knowledge over a period of time.

Phaedo should be read as a refinement of this theory. Discussions of the nature of the soul affirm recollection as a theory of learning.²⁷ The question of pre-existence occurs again, since it (or at the very least, immortality) seems to follow from the affirmation of the eternity of ideas such as Beauty and Goodness. The interlocutors ask whether the soul's knowledge is gained before its birth into the body, or whether it is gained at precisely the moment of birth, and immediately forgotten.²⁸ The latter explanation is dismissed. In this dialogue, the eternity of the ideas is assumed, and the immortality of the soul is proved as a consequence.²⁹ As such, the argument becomes more of an ontological account for how things possess their attributes, namely, by participation in the eternal ideas to which the attributes correspond. A parallel method of learning is suggested as an "hypothetical" method, in the context of the discussion of participation as causation:

...[One] would hold fast to the security of your hypothesis and make your answers accordingly. If anyone should fasten upon the hypothesis itself, you would disregard him and refuse to answer until you could consider whether its consequences were mutually consistent or not. And when you had to substantiate the hypothesis itself, you would proceed in the same way, assuming whatever more ultimate hypothesis commended itself most to you, until you reached one which was satisfactory. You would not mix the two things together by discussing both the principle and its

²⁷ 72e; 91e.

²⁸ 76d-e.

²⁹ 100b. Contrast with *Meno*, where the soul's pre-existence, or immortality, is not argued for. The proof for immortality in *Phaedo* should be compared with Augustine's proof of immortality based on the nature of truth in *imm. an.*

consequences, like one of these destructive critics—that is, if you wanted to discover any part of the truth... But you, I imagine, if you are a philosopher, will follow the course which I describe.³⁰

The relationship between the mind and the forms or ideas is here elicited as a method: it is a process of verification, with the character of an ascent to the knowledge of certifiably true principles. As Sayre points out, whereas the critical method of Socratic dialectic in *Meno* concerns only the necessary conditions for truth, this method, in examining the consequences of an hypothesis, concerns both the necessary and the sufficient conditions for truth.³¹ What *Meno* had to assume in order to explain how knowledge is born in the soul, *Phaedo* must actually prove. Moreover, essential to recollection is the notion that all the aspects of knowledge subsist in an orderly fashion, such that one recalled fact will bring with it a host of other logical associations. In *Meno*, this process is conceived in a basically negative way, in terms of the conversion of opinion into knowledge.³² In the *Phaedo*, we have a process of ascent laid out as a series of steps: posit a hypothesis, then verify by its consequences, and so on. This suggests a mental content that, when brought to light as understanding, is logical, complex and intuitive, apparently having nothing to do with sense-perception or ordinary experience. The sense of “ascent” here is of a movement away from the temporal and spatial, away from the distraction of experience. Recollection is not a method

³⁰ 101d-102a (trans. Hugh Tredennick).

³¹ Kenneth Sayre, *Plato's Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1983), p. 194. This is one of the most important books on the late dialogues of Plato, historical and textual in its approach. My interpretation of *Philebus* in the context of Plato's larger project depends on Sayre's reading of the argument of *Philebus*. However, we differ from Sayre on several points, in particular his conviction that Plato abandons recollection as an explanatory model, setting aside references to recollection in middle and later works as merely “metaphorical.” We will follow the example more of H.G. Gadamer on the place of recollection in Plato's understanding of mental activity as dialectic; cf. *infra*.

³² Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), pp. 6-9.

of bringing again before the mind's eye some particular mental content or image by means of mnemonic tags, ordered by custom or habit. It is a restoration to the mind's eye of clear relationships of logical necessity. The object of recollection is what is universal, and universally true for all. The mind that remembers is not extended over time to encompass a greater number of particulars. It is rather the mind attuned to what is simple. However, says Socrates in *Phaedo*, "even if you find our original assumptions convincing, they still need more accurate consideration."³³ The "assumptions" in question here are the forms, and *Republic* speaks to this need.

Before considering relevant passages of *Republic*, it is worth noting that *Phaedrus*, a dialogue which Augustine may have read³⁴, strongly affirms a sense of memory as something transcendent, de-temporalized. Socrates tells a story in order to highlight the importance of a higher function of memory, as distinguished from the process of remembering by means of "external marks." He specifically criticizes writing in this dialogue, because it has the "very opposite of its true effect. If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within."³⁵ This exchange comes at the conclusion of a dialogue concerning the Beautiful, and the way in which it is desired through the love of the beloved. In place of the written word, conversation, and specifically dialectic, is held up as the "living word" or "living speech."³⁶ The dialectician "selects a soul of the right type, and in it he plants and

³³ 107b.

³⁴ Cf. F. Van Fleteren in *Augustine Through the Ages*, pp. 651-654.

³⁵ 275a (trans. R. Hackforth). Memory here is one, even if it is exercised in different ways, whether by the written word, or (preferably) by the teacher of dialectic.

³⁶ 276a.

sows his words founded on knowledge.”³⁷ His words flourish and grow to the extent that they manifest truthfulness. The speeches he produces strictly for the sake of instruction are his interior children, and are inscribed in the soul of the listener as “legitimate” brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, Socrates blesses the poet and the political speechwriter in the end, so long as in the act of writing they work “with a knowledge of the truth” and with a conviction of the inferiority of the written format compared to the thought itself signified.³⁸ Here we have a recognition of the place of verbal images in recollection³⁹, and therefore in dialectic. Moreover, through the activity of dialectic, we glimpse a way in which memory can serve as a basis for community by the necessary dependence on the other.

Divisions in the way of knowing: Republic

Republic offers several important developments. The boundary between the sensible and intelligible realms remains firmly drawn. The divisions in cognitive activity (cf. *supra*) correspond appropriately to a “two-world ontology”, to use Sayre’s terminology. A new element is the illuminative power of the Good. It is an open question whether the Good for Plato is to the forms or ideas *primus inter pares*: Plato suggests both possibilities in *Republic*. The most important passage for understanding Plato’s conception of dialectic describes the Good as shining down upon reason and its objects, much like the sun illumines both the eye and its objects, giving rise to the activity of seeing.⁴⁰ It is the highest

³⁷ 276e.

³⁸ 278c.

³⁹ At *Phaedo* 74b.

⁴⁰ 508c.

intelligible principle, and yet it transcends what is true and knowable as cause of both the act of knowledge, and the very “essence and existence” of its objects.⁴¹

The intelligible light of the Good extends to the sensible as well as the intelligible, and as a result of this, the sensible can be described as a limited reflection of the intelligible. The epistemological picture reflects the ontological. Plato distinguishes between philosophical, epistemic knowledge (*noesis*) and mathematical, “dianoetic” knowledge. While the sensible realm is of course only conducive to opinion, the intelligible realm corresponds to the dialectical method with which we are familiar, described here again in terms of ascent, as a power that reason uses, “treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses... springboards, so to speak, to enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting point of all.”⁴² This is contrasted with the method of mathematical knowledge that moves from assumptions to conclusions, making “use of the visible forms and talking about them, though they are not thinking of them but of those things of which they are a likeness.” This *a posteriori* method is contrasted with true dialectic, which ascends and descends, remaining always with the ideas; nevertheless it is a legitimate form of knowledge, even though it requires the use of images. Plato discerns the need to refine his conception of an hypothetical method, namely, to include a variety of objects of knowledge. He does not want to abandon, however, a method that depends upon the direct apprehension of the ideas.

The highest principle in *Phaedo* is called by the name of truth; here, it is referred to as the Good. In this context, Plato brings before us the virtues and character of the dialectician, or true philosopher. This is important to the larger

⁴¹ 509b.

⁴² 511b (trans. P. Shorey).

sense of dialectic being developed. Not only does the dialectician give an exact account of the essence of each thing, and as such discerns the Good; he also seeks after proportion and order, and this is reflected in his way of living.⁴³ He embodies the virtues of “magnificence of soul” and friendliness; he is gracious, generous, courageous and fair.⁴⁴ Most important, while the average man is “forgetful of his own soul”, the philosopher is a man of memory, and thus a lover of wisdom.⁴⁵ As we observe in *Phaedrus*, philosophical activity does not have its end in a solitary contemplation of the Good, but in a descent to the fellowship of men, to the life of the virtues, and the duties of instruction. Memory functions to retain a constant and living link to the light of the Good. In *Republic*, the ideas are ordered to the Good, just as the virtues are ordered to the practice of knowledge. There are intimations here of a hierarchical set of relationships—hence the recurring references to “order” and “proportion”—between the forms, and between the forms and the Good. This idea is developed more by later disciples of Plato. Recollection, as dialectic, can be conceived as a movement, upward and downward, within an intricate pattern of logical relationships. The sense of recollection from *Meno* no longer seems adequate; instead we have here memory (*mneme*) as a virtue, a *hexis*, a mode of being rather than a methodological sketch of the mind’s relationship to the forms.

The practice of dialectic: a “new” role for memory

The idea of the forms as interconnected and hierarchically ordered to a first causal principle, is shown by Sayre to be most fully developed in *Philebus*.

⁴³ 534b; 486d.

⁴⁴ 503c; 505a-b.

⁴⁵ 486d; 487a; 490c; 503c.

The essays of Hans-Georg Gadamer on dialectic argue that in *Philebus* we also see a full representation of recollection transformed into dialectic “as a way of life.”⁴⁶ Sayre argues that this constitutes a rejection of the explanatory usefulness of the idea of recollection.⁴⁷ Recollection intends to explain a direct apprehension of the forms apart from the interference of sense images. Dialectic includes a knowledge of the forms, but as part of a program of virtue conceived in a social context. Against Sayre, we would respond that recollection in *Meno* never attains the status of a technique. Plato is clearly unwilling in *Republic* to abandon his conviction of a simple and direct kind of knowledge, as distinct from mathematical knowledge. Sayre is quite right, however, that Plato does not overcome in *Republic* the fundamental dilemma of the knowledge and status of the sensible world. Plato appeals to the idea of participation on several occasions as an ontological response, but as with recollection in *Meno*, this seems little more than a metaphor. Since it is generally agreed that Augustine did not have access to the later dialogues (with the notable exception of *Timaeus*⁴⁸), we can propose at this point that he inherits some form of the Platonic dilemma from *Republic*.

It will be of great use to our examination of Augustine’s early writings to note the avenues taken by Plato in order to tackle the issues at hand. In brief, in *Philebus* we find that a “two-world ontology” is superceded, and participation takes on a stronger role in explaining how forms and the things that participate in them are “ontologically homogenous.”⁴⁹ In the early and middle dialogues, the

⁴⁶ He argues that this idea is present to some extent in earlier dialogues such as *Meno* and *Phaedo*. See “The Idea of the Good in the *Timaeus*”, in *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1983).

⁴⁷ Sayre, p. 193; p. 219.

⁴⁸ In which a firm “two-world ontology” still predominates, despite the appeal to participation in order to explain the relationship between forms and things.

⁴⁹ Sayre’s terminology, p. 15.

forms have the character of divinities: transcendent, absolute, unchanging. *Parmenides* is written in part to show the absurdity that follows from this position. In *Philebus*, the forms are produced and ordered by a higher, intelligent principle: this much is familiar from *Republic*. In addition to a single, highest principle, the forms themselves are explained with reference to two higher principles, unity and plurality, or limit (*peras*) and unlimited (*apeiron*).⁵⁰ What remains is described as the “mixed” (*synkrisis*). The way in which the highest principle governs is through order, proportion and measure, and for this reason the forms are often described in *Philebus* in numerical terms.⁵¹ Number, as Gadamer points out, is a concept that includes both unity and plurality. Particular, even sensible, things are the product of “mixing”; they are no longer mere “becoming” or “flux”, and therefore simply unintelligible, as in *Theatetus*. Here, they are described as the product of limit and unlimited *just like the forms*: they are a “coming-into-being” by virtue of the “measure” achieved “by the aid of the limit.”⁵² Both forms and things are subordinated to and ordered by a first causal principle.

On the epistemological side, we observe Socrates dethroning reason from its place of sole supremacy: “reason and pleasure alike [are] dismissed as being, neither of them, the good itself, inasmuch as they come short of self-sufficiency and the quality of being self-satisfying and perfect.”⁵³ Even as *Philebus* concludes by affirming that “intelligence” is greater than pleasure—not a controversial claim for Plato—both are ordered together in a fivefold, descending

⁵⁰ *Philebus* 23c.

⁵¹ 64d.

⁵² 26d (trans. R. Hackforth). See also 27b: they are “the being that has come to be by the mixture of these two” (the unlimited and the limit). Admittedly, we are neglecting the careful structure of the argument in *Philebus*. The ontological reflections come about only as a result of a lengthy reconsideration of the relationship between reason and pleasure, as described below.

⁵³ 67a.

hierarchy of goods: measure (*metros*), that which is “proportioned, beautiful” (*symmetros, kalos*), reason (*nous*), things proper to the soul such as science, art and right opinion (*episteme, techne, orthe doxe*), and finally the pleasures (*hedone*) of the soul.⁵⁴ This list appears to deliberately exclude the life of the body. Earlier in the dialogue, however, Socrates explains how the “pleasures” or affections of the soul come to pass. They are described as the product of memory, which is in turn the product of experience.⁵⁵ Sensation is a “disturbance” (*seismos*) which “penetrates” both the body and the soul in a way that is “peculiar to each and common to both”; this is properly called a single movement and therefore a single affection.⁵⁶ This language of the body and soul functioning *together* in order to produce an “affection” is remarkable compared with the hostility between soul and body described in *Meno* and *Phaedo*. In the earlier dialogues, for the soul to be subject to the movement of the senses in any way would fundamentally compromise the purity and immutability of soul, and therefore its characteristics of rationality and immortality.

Toward the end of *Philebus*, Plato approaches Aristotle in maintaining that there is no memory prior to experience: the soul cannot forget what it has not perceived. Memory is the “preservation” (*soteria*) of sensation, or of sense images. Recollection, on the other hand, is the “passing over” of images retained by memory, such that what was once experienced by both soul and body is now experienced by soul alone.⁵⁷ What was in *Phaedo* the recollection of universals

⁵⁴ 66a-c.

⁵⁵ 33c; 33e.

⁵⁶ 33d-34a. Compare Augustine, *ord.* 2.2.6.

⁵⁷ 34b. Socrates appends to this a brief discussion about judgment and the manner in which we account for and attempt to correct false sense impressions (38b). It is remarkably similar to Aristotle’s explanation of how error occurs in *De anima*.

alone is now the recollection of particulars—or, at least, particular affections and impressions, abstracted from their particular instances. It is recollection as the active aspect of memory that makes the “universalizing” of the particular possible. Recollection turns the gaze of the soul upward to the ideas, and downward, as it were, to the lived experience of the person. The universal is abstracted from the particular in a manner approaching Aristotle. This abstraction follows a deposition of the forms—not that they lose their measure of transcendence, but rather are required also to account for the particularity of things.

How has Plato come to this point? We have seen how the forms, along with the things that participate in them and thereby possess their attributes, are themselves ordered by the principles of measure, proportion and beauty: indeed, says Socrates, “the good has taken refuge in the character of the beautiful.”⁵⁸ The soul is subject to these same principles. Thus when Plato asks—in an echo of the question moving *Meno*: “how do we inquire after what we do not know?”—how the body desires what it lacks, he can respond that it is not the body that desires but the soul, because *the soul mediates the principles of measure and order for the body*.

This echoes the image in *Phaedrus* of the soul as standing between being and becoming. Dialectic is central to the conception of philosophical activity, simultaneously of “ascent” and “descent”, that mediates between what is and what is coming-to-be. This is why *Philebus* concludes by arguing that the best *life* is what is mixed, even a mixture of pleasure and intelligence.⁵⁹ The good life includes knowledge of what is, and the pleasures that are proper to a life of virtue. The latter are described in terms of the virtuous “mean”, which standard becomes

⁵⁸ 64e.

⁵⁹ 61b: “the good is the mixed life.”

intelligible because dialectic reveals to the soul order, measure and beauty. We have, Socrates concludes, “an incorporeal, ordered system for the rightful control of a corporeal subject in which dwells a soul.”⁶⁰

Gadamer argues that recollection reveals the full dimension of dialectic: “dialectic is not demonstration or proof in the scientific sense of a proof (*apodeixis*), which cogently deduces things from presuppositions. On the contrary, the dialectical art of differentiation presupposes antecedent familiarity with the subject matter and a continuing preview of, and prospect toward, the thing under discussion.”⁶¹ *Philebus* shows how recollection must function both in terms of an “ascent” from experience, and a “descent” from the ideas. In this context, recollection includes all kinds of knowing⁶²: understanding, mathematical knowledge, and knowledge based upon the experience of the soul “in” the body. Hence knowledge is fulfilled in virtue, and the art of dialectic is not merely an exercise in definition, but a *hexis* and a way of living.

⁶⁰ 64b.

⁶¹ And so Gadamer concludes, “Aristotle was right.” *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1986), p. 42 and p. 52.

⁶² Gadamer, *ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

CHAPTER 2:

ARISTOTLE

Even more than Plato, Aristotle can only be considered an indirect philosophical influence on Augustine, again through doxographies, Stoic authors¹, and most importantly, Plotinus and possibly Porphyry. The chapter on Plato concludes by finding *Philebus* on a trajectory toward a more “Aristotelian” conception of the role of the forms in thinking, and additionally toward a psychology resonant with what we find in the later chapters of *De anima* 3. The presence of a section on Aristotle in a dissertation intending to investigate the writings of Augustine is justified largely by his profound influence on Plotinus.

We know that Augustine was familiar with parts of Aristotle’s logical works, known as the *Organon*; in *conf.*, he mentions that he read *Categories* and, to his credit, found it relatively easy to understand. Being under Manichaean influence at that time of his life, he may have misunderstood this text.² An important assumption of our discussion is that we will take the traditional approach of granting a certain philological and doctrinal unity to Aristotle’s texts as we have them.³ We will look mainly at *De anima* and *De memoria et reminiscentia*. The latter text is concerned so exclusively with memory that it limits its own interpretive possibilities within the *Parva Naturalia*; it must also be read in the larger context of Aristotle’s psychology.

¹ Chiefly Cicero; there is no way of knowing whether Augustine was familiar with any later interpreters of Aristotle, even Christian Greek writers such as Anatolius.

² *Conf.* 4.16.28.

³ As an alternative to the “genetic” approach fathered by Werner Jaeger which still dominates scholarship of Aristotle, see the writings of Giovanni Reale, especially *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle* (SUNY Press: Albany, 1980).

Aristotle's method, when turned to the task of psychology, is often described as "naturalistic." In *De anima*, he begins in a familiar style with a doxography of previous positions on the nature of the soul. He states his own position clearly by laying out the tripartite aspects of the soul: vegetative, animal (sensate) and intellectual. The soul, for Aristotle, is not a distinct, personal entity as Augustine might conceive of it; however, this did not prevent medieval interpreters of Aristotle from attempting to find in his writings a distinctly Christian notion of the soul. Aristotle's own understanding emerges with greater clarity and depth as the argument of *De anima* progresses. He describes the soul as the principle of life (*arche ton zoon*)⁴, a particular thing in the sense of a substance (*tode ti*)⁵, and finally, a "substance (*ousia*)" as being "the form of a natural body which potentially has life."⁶ The body is not in itself the origin and principle of its being alive. To say that the soul is its form means that it is the actuality or activity of the body's being alive. We will discuss Aristotle's terminology later. At this point, let us simply note that we are to think of the unity of soul and body in terms of "activity" or function.

The vegetative principle of life is lowest and common to all forms of living things. The sensitive principle is reserved to animal life; this he discusses in the second book of *De anima* and in the early chapters of the third book. He considers the operation of each of the senses in turn, and then in more general terms, the need for a common ground in the soul in order for sense-perception to communicate information about the world meaningfully. The transition into a

⁴ 402a8; we are using the translation of W.S. Hett in the Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1936).

⁵ 402a25.

⁶ 412a21.

discussion of the intellectual soul in the third book is subtle, because it is very difficult in practice to separate the operations of perception and intellection, according to Aristotle. In an entity endowed with intellectual soul, that principle figures inescapably at the level of sense-perception, in acts of judgment, opinion and recollection.

The structure of the argument of *De anima* therefore follows a pattern of ascent through the various faculties—or, better, operations—of the soul. This ascent is reversed when we reach the intellectual soul in its highest capacities. The operation of intellect necessarily pervades every level of psychological activity. However, intellect in its purely active capacity, Aristotle says famously at 3.5, is in principle separable, and even divine.⁷ But he does not develop this reflection in this text. Instead, he concludes *De anima* pragmatically by considering the intellectual soul as it operates in man, exploring how the will and appetite function together in acts of practical wisdom.

The function of memory is unjustly neglected in *De anima*. We shall look at passages where Aristotle raises questions about time-consciousness and judgment, but we can only speculate that Aristotle himself was addressing this neglect when he spoke about memory and recollection in the lectures we have as part of the *Parva Naturalia*. Aristotle does say quite a bit about imagination (*phantasia*) in *De anima*, and much can be inferred from the explicit association of memory and imagination. The treatise *De memoria et reminiscentia* does not connect memory in much detail with the higher functions of the soul. To address this, we shall draw out associations between the operation of memory and the passivity or potency of intellect, as Aristotle does in *De anima*

⁷ 430a18.

De memoria et reminiscentia

This short text is traditionally presented in two chapters; the first, concerning memory, and the second, concerning recollection or reminiscence. From the first, there is a clear distinction between lower and higher functions of memory. Aristotle insists that animals possess memory in a limited, instinctual manner, since they have a capacity for a sort of judgment based on sense-perceptions. However, he says that memory properly belongs to those creatures that are conscious of time, and we will see that this consciousness functions differently on different psychological levels.⁸

Aristotle says that we remember what is past, not what is present nor what is to come. It is based on experience. Memory is related to both sense-perception and the thinking faculty, but in different ways; Plotinus will agree with this.

Aristotle writes:

But memory, even of objects of thought, implies a mental picture (*ouk aneu phantasmatos*). Hence it (memory) would seem to belong incidentally (*kata sumbebekos*) to the thinking faculty, but essentially (*kath' auto*) to the primary sense-faculty.⁹

Aristotle distinguishes not between kinds of memory objects, but between the manner in which the objects of memory are related to thought (which uses them as necessary) and to sensation (which necessarily gives rise to them). Memory is properly derived from an affection of the senses (the "common sense" or "primary sense-faculty"), because Aristotle says that time-consciousness is the result of the

⁸ "*Chronou aisthanetai*" (449b29). The translation of *De memoria et reminiscentia* is also by W.S. Hett, in the same volume of the Loeb Classical Library as *De anima*. See also the translation and commentary of Richard Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory* (Duckworth: London, 1972).

⁹ 450a13.

measurement of motion and magnitude.¹⁰ Since it is not an affection of the mind, it is not primarily involved with the mind, but only incidentally.¹¹ This way of speaking might seem strange, since judgment, for example, involves the intellectual combination of concepts over a period of time. The issue concerns the preservation of the active function of mind even while it is in some sense dependent on the body for knowledge. We will discuss this—that is, the relation of imagination to thought—in more detail when we consider particular texts from *De anima*.

In explaining the relation between imagination and memory, Aristotle makes a clarification. He says that the objects of memory are not the affections of the senses themselves; hence, in remembering, we do not precisely re-experience what it is that we have remembered.¹² Memories rather have a dual aspect: on the one hand, they are likenesses of some thing, while on the other hand, they are objects of contemplation in themselves, apart from their function as signs. Aristotle conceives this loosely as the difference between a thought and a memory. When we see a picture of someone, on the one hand we see a portrait which is a likeness of some person, and therefore an “aid” or tool for the memory;

¹⁰ 450a10. Thus imagination can be fairly described as a tool for the operation of memory.

¹¹ Michael Wedin calls this a “weak relation”: “thought involves imagination not on its own terms but in virtue of something else.” See *Mind and Imagination in Aristotle* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1988), pp. 107-109.

¹² 450a23. This is an important clarification for Plotinus. See *conf.* 10.14.22: “Perhaps, then, just as food is brought from the stomach in the process of rumination, so also by recollection these things are brought up from the memory. But then why in the mind or ‘mouth’ of the person speaking, that is to say reminiscing, about past gladness or sadness is there no taste of sweetness or bitterness? Or is this a point where the incomplete resemblance between thought and rumination makes the analogy misleading? Who would willingly speak of such matters if, every time we mentioned sadness or fear, we were compelled to experience grief or terror? Yet we would not speak about them at all unless in our memory we could find not only the sounds of the names attaching to the images imprinted by the physical senses, but also the notions of things themselves. These notions we do not receive through any bodily entrance. The mind itself perceives them through the experience of its passions and entrusts them to memory; or the memory itself retains them without any conscious act of commitment.”

on the other hand, we simply see a picture and we perceive it as such. One is referential, the other is not.

Being based upon experience, memory is naturally formed over a period of time, however brief. Recollection differs in that the *conscious* passage of time is added to the act of remembering. Recollection is an active, inferential process whereby an affection is brought again before the mind's eye by a series of associations and connections.¹³ These associations may be necessary (logical) or else customary. He mentions, possibly with Plato in mind, that simple recollection is not the same as learning, although it is a self-initiated process.¹⁴ Most importantly, remembering is related to sense-perception in a way that recollection is not, since the latter does not begin from the actual affection, but rather from an association of ideas. As such, recollection as Aristotle describes it shares some attributes with Platonic recollection. However, even recollection in some way depends on the soul's relation to body since, Aristotle argues, physiological differences between men can correspond to differences in the ability to recollect.¹⁵

This is a very brief account of the argument of a short text. The most important point we wish to highlight is the relationship that memory has to sense-perception on the one hand, and to thinking on the other. The significance of the "incidental" and "essential" relationships can only be illuminated with further

¹³ 451b5.

¹⁴ Although he says it "is possible for the same man to learn or discover the same thing twice" (451b8). I don't think that this passage is a strong and deliberate response to Plato, since his description of recollection here has little resemblance to recollection as described by Plato in his earlier dialogues. The most significant difference between their teachings lies in Aristotle's insistence that, at the first moment of learning, no time has elapsed, and therefore no memory.

¹⁵ 453a32. "Dwarfish people and those who have large upper extremities have poorer memories than their opposites, because they carry a great weight on their organ of perception... The very young and very old have inferior memories because of the forces at work in them; for the latter are in a state of rapid decay, and the former in a state of rapid growth."

reference to *De anima*. These different relationships correspond to the differences between memory and recollection, the former having the passive sense of the reception of sense images over a passage of time, and the latter originating in the deliberative function of the intellect. Aristotle, characteristically, does not speculate on the broader implications of what he concludes about the nature of memory. Nor does he develop the questions of direct interest to our project that are posed in this text, such as “why it is impossible to think of anything without continuity, or to think of things which are timeless except in terms of time.”¹⁶

De anima: imagination mediating sense-perception and intellection

In order to appreciate better the significance of memory and time-consciousness in general in Aristotle’s psychology, we need to understand the operation of the imagination. There are references throughout *De anima* developing the idea of imagination, but 3.3 is particularly concerned with it. Memory is closely aligned in function with the imagination. As with imagination, however, Aristotle never thinks of memory as a “faculty” in its own right. The only distinct aspects of the soul are the vegetative, sensitive and intellective, and even here, we must resist thinking of them as parts. The activity of the soul crosses the conceptual boundary between them. Imagination, for example, unites sense and intellect, and thus soul and body, in act. Without it, the images taken in through the senses cannot be coherently apprehended and ordered, and therefore neither judgment nor speculation are possible. While mediating sense-perception and understanding, however, imagination maintains their distinctness by different modes of relating to them.

¹⁶ 450a8.

Aristotle's understanding of sense-perception is admittedly complex.¹⁷ Our analysis will focus on his explanation of it in terms of "activity" and "passivity", since we will see that a pre-occupation with this language runs throughout the writings of Plotinus and Augustine in his early period. Both have difficulty with the notion of sense-perception as something fundamentally passive, in which the soul is simply "stamped" with impressions received through the senses. This would seem to compromise the independence and superiority of soul over and against the body.

While Plotinus avoids language suggesting that the soul is in any way "in" the body, Aristotle insists that in some sense it is. He wants to argue for the unity and particularity of the individual composite of body and soul. It is not accidental that a soul is the form of a *particular* body. The forms of souls are indeed particular, and their individuality is not derived simply from the fact of their physical particularity.

Aristotle is not however unmindful of the abovementioned concerns. Early in the second book of *De anima* he points out that the sort of "being acted upon" (*paschein*) that occurs in sense-perception is in fact an action (*energein*), even if it is an action in some way incomplete.¹⁸ Thinking, he says, is not an alteration in the state of the mind, but rather "the realization of a nature"; sense-perception is analogous to thinking, with the main difference that it is external

¹⁷ The scholarly literature is vast. See G.E.R. Lloyd and G.E.L. Owen, eds., *Aristotle on Mind and the Senses* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1978); see the articles in the fourth volume of J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji, eds., *Articles on Aristotle* (Duckworth: London, 1979); D.W. Hamlyn, "Aristotle's Account of Aesthesis in the *De anima*", *Classical Quarterly* 9 (1959), pp. 6-16; Franz Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle*, trans. Rolf George (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1977); J. Owens, "Aristotle's Definition of Soul" in R. Palmer *et al.*, eds., *Studies in Memory of Philip Merlan* (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1971); see also the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Philoponus, Simplicius and Thomas Aquinas. On imagination in particular, see the writings of Michael Wedin (cf. *supra*) and Seth Benardete.

¹⁸ 417b2.

(*exothēn*) just as the objects of sense-perception are external.¹⁹ This follows, according to Aristotle, because the senses perceive particulars, whereas the mind apprehends universals, which exist—“in a way (*pos*)”—in the soul. Aristotle thus affirms the clear, Platonic distinction between the realms of sense-perception and knowledge based on the opposition of externality and interiority. Operationally speaking, he will affirm their simultaneous and complex interdependence, while demonstrating the relative freedom of thought as contrasted with the necessity of sense-perception—free, precisely because no external ‘thing’ is required for the act of understanding.

Aristotle says that the objects of the senses are threefold in nature. The most basic level of sense-perception is the apprehension of proper sense-objects by the appropriate senses: sight perceives colour, hearing perceives sound, and so on. The perception of what are called “common sensibles” or common “objects” such as movement, magnitude, number or shape, is shared by several of the senses. They are perceived in this manner “because we happen to have a sense for each of these qualities, and so recognize them when they occur together; otherwise we should never perceive them except incidentally, as e.g., we perceive of Cleon’s son, not that he is Cleon’s son, but that he is white; and this white object is incidentally Cleon’s son.”²⁰

Aristotle considers each of the senses in turn in some detail. In general, sensation functions similarly in every case. Direct contact is required, or else the presence of a medium that activates the sense organ. At first, an object is potentially sensible, and the sense-organ potentially perceiving. Sensation occurs when both object and subject are active. While the physical object remains

¹⁹ 417b20.

²⁰ 425a23-27.

distinct from the perceiving subject, a certain identity comes to pass between the two with the result that the subject is actively sensing “such and such” a thing. The organs in question do actually take on the attributes perceived²¹, and for this reason Aristotle—like Plotinus after him—describes sensation as a sort of mean between extremes. For example, our skin does not report the sensation of a substance that is the exact same temperature as our flesh, *qua* temperature; of course, the presence of the substance may be reported by some other means (e.g. pressure, texture). But we only perceive the extremes that fall to either side of the mean embodied by our particular sense organ, e.g. something hotter or colder than our skin temperature.

Aristotle assures us that the passivity of this account of sense-perception is only part of the picture, and that the reception of information actually occurs after the manner of an activity. The commonly noted example of a stamp making an impression in wax can be gravely misleading. The way that sight functions offers a better illustration—and, indeed, this illustration figures prominently as an image for how both sense-perception and knowledge occur. Sight requires the medium of transparency, and this transparency is “activated” by light. Transparency is perceptible only by virtue of the colour of something else, and it is light that makes colour visible. Thus transparency is necessary: its negativity is the possibility of something that can be seen, and as activated by light, it in turn acts upon the sense organ to make it actually seeing.²² Aristotle describes a similar mechanism for the sense of hearing.²³

²¹ 423b8, ff.

²² 419a15.

²³ 420a3, ff.

Aristotle concludes his initial discussion of sense-perception by observing that sense (*aisthesis*) is “that which is receptive of the form of sensible objects without the matter”, and that, as we have noted, this reception happens after the manner of an activity.²⁴ He clarifies at a later point in the third book, saying that the essence of the sensed object and the sensing organ remain distinct, but that they are identified in the activity of sensation through the intellectual form.

What exists is either sensible or intelligible; and in a sense (*pos*) knowledge is the knowable and sensation the sensible. We must consider in what sense this is so. Both knowledge and sensation are divided to correspond to their objects, the potential to the potential, and the actual to the actual. The sensitive and cognitive faculties of the soul are potentially these objects, *viz.*, the sensible and the knowable. These faculties, then, must be identical either with the objects themselves or with their forms. Now they are not identical with the objects; for the stone does not exist in the soul, but only the form of the stone.²⁵

The “act” of the thing sensed is a function of its actually being sensed. It is not an activity that causes a resulting reaction in the sense organ. When Aristotle says that the form of the thing sensed is received “without matter”, this does not mean that there is no transference of physical attributes. The image of the sense organ as a mean should illustrate this. Rather, the sensing organ takes on the attributes of the thing sensed in a limited fashion, proper to its own mode of receiving information, without becoming physically identical with the thing sensed, or even necessarily coming into physical contact with the thing sensed.

Both of these aspects hold true in a comparison between sense-perception and thinking, which Aristotle describe as having an “analogical” relationship. Thinking, he says, is like sensation: in both cases “the soul judges and knows what is.”²⁶ Sensation pertains to things external and particular, and thinking to

²⁴ 424a18.

²⁵ 431b22-432a1.

²⁶ “*Krinei ti... kai gnorizei ton onton*” (427a20).

things internal and universal. The mode of apprehension occurs after the same manner, but since objects of thought have no matter from which the forms must be abstracted, they are identical with the mind in act: hence, “in general, the mind when actively thinking is identical with its objects.”²⁷ Because ideas are immaterial and therefore do not exist in “some place” outside of the mind before they are actually thought, Aristotle describes the intellectual soul as the “place of forms.”²⁸

That Aristotle intends to describe between sense and intellect a proportional relationship of qualitatively different faculties, and not just differences of degree, is evident from the fact that he is careful to criticize “older thinkers” who made no differentiation between thought and sense-perception, and who sought to link thought with a merely bodily function. Since the perception of proper objects, such as “redness”, is always true²⁹, and since intellectual apprehension is likewise true, error comes into play somewhere in the complex inter-relationship between thought and sensation, that is, judgment acting upon the data of imagination (considered as a repository of sense images).

Assertion, like affirmation, states an attribute of a subject, and is always either true or false; but this is not always so with the mind: the thinking of the definition in the sense of the essence is always true and is not an instance of predication; but just as while the seeing of a proper object is always true, the judgment whether the white object is a man or not is not always true, so it is with every object abstracted from its matter.³⁰

The issue of the nature of judgment arises at two points in *de anima* 3, in the context of the discussion of imagination (Ch.3), and in the context of the

²⁷ 431b18; cf. 431b23: “knowledge is the knowable”; 431a1: “knowledge is identical with its object.”

²⁸ 429a28.

²⁹ Cf. *supra*.

³⁰ 430b24-32. See 432a16: “the judging capacity... is a function of the intellect and sensation combined.”

discussion of the practical intellect (Chs.6-8). Judgment distinguishes amongst what is brought in by the various senses, e.g. what is tasted from what is heard; more importantly, it enacts the combination and differentiation of concepts in such a way that the particularity of sense impressions is subordinated to the universality of conceptualization. Whereas sensations can occur only in a temporal succession, judgment must occur without any interval of time; thus we say “I *now* see that there is a difference”, and not “I see that there is *now* a difference.”³¹ Aristotle illustrates:

If the thinking is concerned with things past or future, then we take into account and include a notion of time. For falsehood always lies in the process of combination, for if a man calls white not-white, he has combined the notion not-white. It is equally possible to say that all these cases involve division. At any rate it is not merely true or false to say that Cleon is white, but also that he was or will be. The principle which unifies is in every case the mind.³²

Judgment reveals the presence of thought in sense-perception precisely in its in being temporally “unitive”, yet, as Aristotle points out, it is also discursive in that it brings together many diverse elements. For this reason, Aristotle speaks of judgment as a mean, and point of singular perspective: “the last thing to be affected (in judgment, whether of sensible or intelligible things) is a single entity and a single mean, although it has more than one aspect.”³³ Judgment can unify what is diverse because it is distinct from sense-perception³⁴, and because it presupposes two aids, memory and imagination.

³¹ 426b27.

³² 430a32-430b6. This passage in 3.6 clearly implies that, apart from the instance of mind as pure act in 3.5, all knowledge utilizes judgment and therefore is concerned with the past and the future in some combination.

³³ 431a17-20.

³⁴ 427a14. In this emphasis on “distinctness” there is a foreshadowing of Plotinus’ fundamental principle of the distinctness of the unifying principle, considered in the next chapter.

In brief, imagination serves to make what is perceived by the senses available to thought in the form of images. The organs of sense receive information by the communication of physical attributes. The imagination takes this information to a first level of remove from particular acts of sensation. Memory gathers the temporal succession of sense images in a kind of continuity: these are “*phantasmata*”, likenesses which are the product of imagination (*phantasia*). Memory thus first functions at the basic level of enabling coherent sensuous information, an ability shared by animals, according to Aristotle. Secondly, memory enables the recombination of images necessary for deliberate judgment and recollection. The relation of memory to both sense-perception and thinking is a function of imagination, since what is remembered is a product of the imagination: an image or likeness (*phantasma*). Memory adds to the process of image formation a consciousness of time elapsed.³⁵

There are however two aspects to the higher function of memory according to Aristotle. First, the “unconscious” sense of memory, in which judgment is enabled by the extension of mind over a period of time; second, the active and deliberative recollection of images. Adding these two aspects to the basic image-forming operation of imagination gives us the threefold distinction in types of interior activity that came to be enshrined for the West in the medical treatises of Galen. This source would be vital for both Patristic and later scholastic writers, such as Aquinas and Avicenna.³⁶

³⁵ Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1992), p. 17.

³⁶ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1990), pp. 52-53. I think it would be more true to Aristotle’s text to align the dual aspects of memory with the distinction Aristotle himself makes between the purely receptive sense of imagination, and the “deliberative” imagination (cf. 434a8), but as Carruthers points out, Galen is part of a long tradition attempting to reconcile Aristotle with some version of Platonism.

In *De anima*, however, Aristotle does not develop his reflections for us in much detail. There is only a brief discussion of the sense in which memory enables judgment, and he considers hardly at all the necessity of recollection for knowledge. We can however infer much from his idea of passive intellect.³⁷ We have seen that sensation and thought, while different, are nevertheless considered analogous. Passive and active aspects are necessary for thought as much as for sensation. These are not “parts” of the mind, but rather a way to describe how the forms of thought actually come to be in the soul. Aristotle speaks of the passivity of the intellect in order to emphasize the purity of function of the active intellect, especially its distinctness from sense-perception. The intellect is in fact nothing until it thinks, says Aristotle, except for the capacity for thinking; it is potentially identical with all objects of thought. It comes to be identical with the forms of thinking by virtue of its active function. While the passive “becomes” all things, the active “makes” all things. The active intellect is described as “a positive state, like light... essentially an activity.”³⁸ The active intellect inscribes, as it were, the forms of thought in the passive intellect, like a hand writing on a slate. In doing so, passive becomes active, and the mind in act becomes actually identical with its thinking. This process is described as abstraction because the chief source for the forms is the imagination— although the forms exist for thought more easily since they do not require abstraction from matter. The senses perceive the attribute “straight”, but the intellect perceives the essence, which is “straightness.”

Thought apprehends a universal, while sense perceives a particular. In this example, of course, we see how the apprehension of the universal depends on the temporally prior perception of the particular. This is the point at which a firm line

³⁷ This is found mainly in *De anima* 3.4.

³⁸ 430a16-18.

is often drawn between Aristotle and a Platonist, because it is clearly the case that, to the extent that the operation of the intellectual soul depends on the sensitive soul, the mind is dependent on a process of abstraction for its content. Then again, perhaps Platonic dialectic is not so very unlike Aristotelian abstraction, especially given that, for both, a concept of intellectual illumination undergirds the activity of thinking.³⁹

The passivity of intellect speaks to the abiding necessity of memory; in fact, Aristotle observes that this passivity points to a temporal disjunction in knowledge for which judgment is actually a corrective. "Actual knowledge is identical with its object", says Aristotle, and so the passage of time is not relevant for active intellect. Mind as purely active "does not think intermittently."⁴⁰ Consequently active intellect alone would not require memory for knowledge. But this is clearly not the case for the composite, man, who possesses in addition a sensitive and vegetative soul. Man has active intellect in some sense, since the active element, being logically and efficiently prior, initiates the process of abstraction; but because he is not simply active intellect, he depends on the imagination, and therefore sense-perception. For this reason, he says that the soul never thinks without "a mental image."⁴¹ Plotinus will largely agree, so long as "mental image" can include verbal as well as other kinds of images. When we

³⁹ On abstraction, cf. 432a1-11. "The soul, then, acts like a hand; for the hand is an instrument which employs instruments, and in the same way the mind is a form which employs forms, and sense is a form which employs the forms of sensible objects. But since apparently nothing has a separate existence, except sensible magnitudes, the objects of thought—both the so-called abstractions of mathematics and all states and affections of sensible things—reside in sensible forms. And for this reason, as no one could ever learn or understand anything without the exercise of perception, so even when we think speculatively, we must have some mental picture of which to think." The innate presence of the forms in *Meno*, which are unearthed with the help of the teacher of dialectic, is arguably near to this.

⁴⁰ 430a19-22. This passage is considered textually controversial by some scholars, such as W.D. Ross, but I am choosing to take the Greek text as traditionally received.

⁴¹ "*Phantasma*" (431a17). See note 38, above, as well as 431b2 on how the thinking faculty can only think the forms in "mental images."

contemplate the idea of justice, we can form no conception of justice apart from what we have learned experientially (whether personally or by the instrument of a teacher) of the particular attributes of just actions or persons.⁴² The acquisition of language and concepts is necessary not only for instruction, but for understanding. Memory enables learning, precisely because there is no innate possession of either language or concepts. Nevertheless, memory does not precede learning, because there is no remembering before time has elapsed.

The dependence upon imagination, and therefore on sense-perception, has been explained in terms of an “essential” relationship in *De memoria et reminiscentia*. This is more clearly understood as part of a series of analogous dependent relations. From the “top-down” perspective of the active operation of the intellect, the imagination is a tool used for the purpose of thinking: the intellect does not passively receive images as the senses receive attributes of what they perceive. Recollection, the active operation of memory, is a part of the active, deliberative function that imagination has in relation to the active intellect. The fact that this relationship is “incidental” follows from the fact that mind, in its essential nature as act, is eternal and unchanging and therefore in principle not subject to time-consciousness in the usual sense. While memory looks to both sense-perception and intellection, it is more properly associated with the former, as pertaining to what comes into being and passes away. It is associated with the latter by the necessity required by the inescapable unity of form and matter, soul and body—but, of course, the necessity is considered from the side of the potential, the material, which, apart from its form, is basically nothing.

⁴² Contrast this to Augustine’s discussion of how righteousness is loved at *trin.* 8.9.13.

Concluding remarks

Let us try to respond to several questions left unanswered by *De memoria et reminiscencia*. Why do we need temporal continuity for thought to be possible? In the opening sentences of *Metaphysica*, Aristotle says that experience is the product of memory.⁴³ True human—as opposed to animal—experience is the creative offspring of remembered events, and it requires the work of judgment and deliberation.⁴⁴ Understanding is consequently limited by experience. An account of how active intellect functions explains how thought is possible, but not how it actually occurs for the embodied, intellectual soul. Memory plays an essential mediating function, making temporal continuity intelligible. Becoming is more than flux; through the lens of memory, it is unified, orderly series of discrete events. As a tool of the image-making faculty, and therefore for judgment, memory translates what is merely discursive into a language for thought.

If memory gathers into a meaningful unity what is extended over a period of time, why then does it not enable us to think “timelessly” what is timeless? In a certain sense, it does. We have seen that the proper objects of thought are universals, abstracted from their physical instantiations. Judgment, closely linked to the operation of the imagination, does not simply universalize the particularity of experienced impressions. Rather, it is the nature of judgment to hold together the particularity of the thing perceived with the universality of the thing understood, the “straight” with the “straightness.” Aristotle remains committed to

⁴³ 980b28.

⁴⁴ Aristotle distinguishes between imagination as it functions in animals and in intelligent persons: “in what sense could they have imagination? Perhaps, just as their movements are indeterminate, so they also have imagination and desire, but only indeterminately (*aoristos*). Imagination in the form of sense is found, as we have said, in all animals, but deliberative imagination only in the calculative (*logistikes*); for to decide whether one shall do this or that calls at once for calculation, and one must measure by a single standard, for one pursues the greater good. This implies the ability to combine several images into one” (434a4-10).

a realist epistemology because he depends upon a realist (or naturalistic) psychology. To the extent that the mind is associated with body and the senses, even if this relationship be described as “incidental”, the operations of the mind must be understood in terms of the body and the dependence of mind on the senses. Thought, again, does not occur without mental images (*phantasmata*); even if we speak of the contemplation of the idea of justice, our conception of justice is formed by the particular instantiation of justice that occasioned our thinking in the first place. That the two are distinct indicates that Aristotle has some sort of conception of an intellectual form. For Aristotle, memory has a proper role with respect to both—the form in itself, and the form in the composite thing—and in this respect he leaves us with a more unified anthropological picture than either Plato or Plotinus.

CHAPTER 3:

PLOTINUS

General remarks on the nature of soul

According to Plotinus, intellect is a procession and image of the One, and soul is analogously a procession and image of intellect.¹ These processions are not to be understood in temporal terms, but rather as movements from unity into plurality. In mythological terms, the processions are at once the result of an act of a primordial “*tolma*”² and the necessary result of the productive character of the first principle. The integrity and unity of both intellect and soul is restored by their “conversion” to the higher principle, effected by an act of contemplation and desire. While procession and return are both expressions of a desire for being, ultimately each “*hypostasis*” is properly understood in relation to the higher principle. Thus Plotinus will say that soul most properly *is* intellect,³ and intellect acts as a cause only in an instrumental relation to the efficient causality of the One.⁴

Soul, generally speaking, subtly mediates between the intelligible and sensible realms. It expresses the formal causality of the first principle in movement and in time, and therefore in body. The primary activity of soul (its “receptive” function) is the contemplation of intellect; its secondary activity (its

¹ Many translations use the term “expression” (*logos prophorikos*) to describe the lower hypostases; see Plotinus, *Enneads*, 7 vols., trans. A.H. Armstrong (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1984), 3.5.9.19, 5.1.3.9 and 5.1.6.45.

² *Enn.* 5.1.1; see also 4.8.5. on the idea of soul both “falling” and being “sent.”

³ A.H. Armstrong, “Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus” in *Dionysius* 1 (1977), pp. 49-68.

⁴ Lloyd P. Gerson, *Plotinus* (Routledge: London, 1994), p. 58.

“productive” function) is to be the principle and source of nature.⁵ As such, it animates the heavens and the earth, remaining whole and one while being everywhere present and at work:

As the rays of the sun light up a dark cloud, and make it shine and give it a golden look, so the soul entering into the body of heaven gives it life and immortality and wakes what lies inert.... For soul has given itself to the whole magnitude of heaven, as far as it extends, and every stretch of space, both great and small, is ensouled.... All things live by the whole, and all soul is present everywhere, made like to the father who begat it (*gennesanti*) in its unity and universality.⁶

We must distinguish between soul as the universal principle of nature (the “world soul” or “soul of the all”) and soul in its individual instantiations. Though the distinction between universal and particular soul is not as final for Plotinus as for later writers, he clearly has some conception of individual persons.⁷

Individuality depends on the relationship between the soul and the highest part of the soul, properly conceived of as its intellect. This part is often described by Plotinus as transcendent, undescended, inhabiting the intelligible realm, and fundamentally indivisible: he compares the soul to a line that has “flowered out” from its center point, remaining above and whole while departing from itself.⁸

Soul is not, strictly speaking, divided in its descending, but only in its “manifestation” in body and time. Plotinus wants to say that this division is a matter of perspective only—although this is a controversial aspect of his

⁵ *Enn.* 3.8.3 and 2.2.1.37. Soul does this by containing all of the reasons (*logoi*) of nature, and by being the motive will of nature. See the explanation of Emile Bréhier in *La Philosophie de Plotin* (Boivin et Compagnie: Paris, 1928), p. 53: “En effet, parce qu’elle est une âme, la force naturelle n’est pas seulement une force motrice et active, mêlée à la matière qu’elle ordonne, elle est encore l’activité contemplative qui contient en elle l’ordre qu’elle impose, parce qu’elle a contemplé cet ordre dans l’intelligence. Par un côté, l’âme touche à l’intelligence qui est l’ordre même; par un autre côté, elle touche à la matière qu’elle organise.”

⁶ *Enn.* 5.1.2, trans. A.H. Armstrong.

⁷ Cornelia de Vogel, “The Concept of Personality in Greek and Christian Thought” in *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 2 (Catholic University of America Press: Washington, D.C., 1963), pp. 20-60. See also John M. Rist, “Forms of Individuals in Plotinus” in *Classical Quarterly* 13.2 (Nov. 1963), pp. 223-231.

⁸ *Enn.* 4.2.

teaching.⁹ The division of soul is not actually an affection (*pathema*) of soul, but rather of body. Such a formulation at first sounds incoherent. This way of speaking springs from Plotinus' desire to distance himself from both an Aristotelian and a Stoic conception of embodied or immanent form. In defending the coherence of what he sees as a Platonic conception of form, Plotinus insists that, in order for a "ruling principle" to truly be a principle and cause of something, it must transcend what it purports to explain.¹⁰ This idea will dominate all of Plotinus' thinking about soul and sense-perception, and will have a manifest influence in Augustine's early writings.

Individual soul, in its essence, is "of the same kind" as the universal world soul: "when you look at it without its accretions and take it in its purified state you will find that very same honourable thing which we said was soul, more honourable than everything which is body."¹¹ Because individual souls and the world soul have a common origin in *nous*, they share (*sympatheis*) a "community of feeling."¹² However, while the world soul has made and continues to make the world, individual souls only tend it as "gardeners", bringing into being through art(ifice) what is potentially present. Moreover, while the world soul contemplates intellect absolutely, individual souls look only to the partial intellects to which they pertain. Thus individual souls possess the nature of the

⁹ See the chapters on Plotinus and Iamblichus in Carlos Steel, *The Changing Self. A Study on the Soul in Later Neoplatonism: Iamblichus, Damascius and Priscianus* (Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België: Brussels, 1978).

¹⁰ *Enn.* 4.1. Plotinus explains in this text that soul is divisible in the sense of being in many places at once precisely because it is intelligible and distinct from body; moreover, it is able to unify and actually be a "ruling principle" because it remains one.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 5.1.2.

¹² *Ibid.* 4.3.8.

eternal and unbounded (*apeiron*), even though they are in a strict sense numerically one.¹³

Soul and body

We have said that soul pertains to the realm of time and movement. Respecting the idea that the “ruling principle” of a thing must be distinct from it in order to be wholly present to the thing that it explains, Plotinus insists on a clear separation between body and soul. He rejects Aristotle’s notion of the soul as the form of the body and the *particular* cause of its life. Instead, he distinguishes between soul, the forms that are in bodies and bodies themselves.¹⁴ Part of the soul remains undescended, abiding as a pure, “single expression of intellect.”¹⁵ Another part of the soul looks to the physical world, and in union with the body, we have what is sometimes referred to as the “composite.”

Here we find the same tension between necessity and freedom that applies to the procession of intellect from the One, and world soul from the intellect. Plotinus says that each soul has a body prepared for it according to its “disposition.”¹⁶ When a soul chooses to “go forth”, it will produce (*gennesei*) a place, and therefore a body, for itself. At the same time, however, he says that if body did not exist, soul would not go forth, since there would be no place to which it could go.¹⁷ Plotinus wants to preserve the active and free characteristics

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 4.1.1. These three are described, consecutively, as “one and many”, “many and one” (e.g. a quality) and “many only.” A.H. Armstrong, in a note to this text in the Loeb edition, points out that the obscure differentiation here between soul and the forms of bodies raises the troubling question of whether Plotinus has in fact distinguished between a soul and a quality.

¹⁵ A.H. Armstrong, “Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus”, p. 56.

¹⁶ This is a manner of speaking very close to that of Origen; cf. *De principiis* 1.7-8.

¹⁷ *Enn.* 4.3.9. and 4.3.12. In chapters 13 and 18 Plotinus repeats this dichotomy, saying that the soul has a natural-tendency to its proper place, whose time is determined as the natural-growth-of

of the soul. He bypasses the tension of this position by insisting on the fundamental goodness of everything. The physical world cannot simply be the product of some evil, primordial “fall”, but in fact must be regarded as the product of the Good—even if it is the lowest and therefore most morally ambiguous product of its activity.¹⁸ Plotinus speaks most strongly of this in 2.9, “Against the Gnostics.” The fact of body is not the difficulty for the individual soul, but rather the alienation of soul from its home (*nous*); body offers a tremendous potential for distraction to the soul, which should be constantly effecting its return to *nous* by contemplation. Matter becomes a prison by virtue of the state of the soul-in-exile.¹⁹

The soul is therefore divided between the realm of intellect, its proper home and origin, and the realm of body, its ordained dwelling place. For this reason, Plotinus identifies the nature of a person with soul precisely to the extent that it looks to intellect. This raises the question as to what part soul plays in the lesser functions of a person, such as sense-perception. In rejecting the Aristotelian conception of an embodied soul,²⁰ Plotinus effectively detaches personality from the life of the body:

We ourselves are not Intellect. We are in accord with it by our rational power which first receives it. For we perceive through perception, even if it is not we ourselves who are the perceivers: do we then reason like this, and think through Intellect like this? No, it is we ourselves who reason and we ourselves make the acts of intelligence in discursive reasoning; for this is what we ourselves are. The activities of Intellect are from above in the same way that those of sense-perception are from below; we are this, the principal part of the soul, in the middle between two powers, a worse

things ; and yet this tendency is also a function of “natural blame”, the result of a justice determined by “secret reasons.”

¹⁸ This concern is fundamental to the ex-Manichean Augustine: he too, like Plotinus, consistently invokes the goodness of creation even while he warns against the habit-forming power of body over the soul.

¹⁹ To be fair, other texts offer a less optimistic reading; cf. n. 49 below.

²⁰ *Enn.* 4.7.8.

and a better, the worse that of sense-perception, the better that of Intellect. But it is generally agreed that sense-perception is always ours—for we are always perceiving—but there is disagreement about Intellect, both because we do not always use it and because it is separate; and it is separate because it itself does not incline towards us, but we rather look up towards it. Sense-perception is our messenger, but Intellect is our king.²¹

The soul, then, uses the body as an instrument for sense-perception; this language resonates strongly with that used by Augustine in the twelfth book of *De Genesi ad litteram*, where he describes sense-perception as a “messenger” in service to the soul.²² Soul, however, approaches intellect in likeness when it is reasoning, even as it derives its power from intellect. Plotinus could well say that the relation of body to soul here is analogous to that of soul and intellect, to the extent that body is moved and illuminated by the soul. He would not say however, as Aristotle does, that soul is “in” body, but rather that body is in soul, abiding perpetually in the higher principle, deriving its being and well-being from the same.²³ This picture of soul as mediating between the sensible and the intellectual figures prominently in Augustine’s early dialogues—with the important difference that, for Augustine, *nous* and the One (or the Good) are collapsed into one divine person. This makes it more sensible that Augustine should not contemplate a division within the very nature of the soul, but only a division in terms of “affection.”

Sense-perception and affection

How then does sense-perception actually occur? Plotinus sees sensation as fundamentally passive, and for this reason, certain texts indicate that the soul

²¹ *Ibid.* 5.3.3.

²² 12.24.51.

²³ *Enn.* 4.3.22.

plays very little part in it. The soul is the purely active principle; it is receptive only with regard to what comes to it from above. Of course, this raises questions about how we can say that “we” perceive anything at all. Plotinus resists Aristotle’s image of an “imprint” or stamp made on the soul. To the extent that Plotinus is responding to, and at times, actively arguing against, Aristotle, his explanation of the mechanism of sense-perception can be difficult to clarify.

When discussing pleasure and pain, Plotinus makes a distinction between the affections (which occur in the body only) and the knowledge of these affections (which occurs in the soul).²⁴ He writes in *Enneads* 4.4.19: “the affection (*to pathos*), then, is there in the body, but the knowledge belongs to the perceptive soul, which perceives in the neighbourhood of the affection and reports to that in which the sense-perceptions terminate.” He does not use this manner of speaking in other passages, referring instead to the “whole soul.” In this case, the soul is not affected, but knows that there is an affection in the body, because it is “situated next to it.” So the soul perceives, so to speak, the affection, but without in any way being affected. We therefore say that a person is affected only analogously, and not properly. Plotinus’ explanation of the necessity of this conclusion is remarkable:

(As for the knowledge of pain, if) it is knowledge it is unaffected, so that it can know and give a sound report. For a messenger who is affected, if he gives himself over to the affection, either does not deliver his message or is not a sound and reliable messenger.²⁵

Sense-perception is discussed in this context, as a part of affection. The soul, “like a mother trying to make out the wishes of the sufferer”, responds with a certain desire, “which is the final stage of that which begins in the body.” Sense-

²⁴ *Ibid.* 4.4.19-23.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 4.4.19.27-30.

perception provides the image for the soul whose act is to desire or will. Based upon this, the soul judges whether flight or resistance is called for. The relationship of soul to sense-perception in this picture is basically negative.

If the soul is not affected by sense-perceptions, Plotinus surmises that there must be some third term between the soul and the sensed object, "which will receive the form of a thing." This bodily organ is a sort of proportional mean between the two extremes of sensible and intelligible, with

the capacity both of receiving and of transmitting information, suitable to be assimilated to each of the extremes. For since it is the organ of a kind of knowledge it must not be the same either as the knower or what is going to be known, but suitable to be assimilated to each, to the external object by being affected, and to the internal knower by the fact that its affection becomes form.²⁶

This language is very much reminiscent of Aristotle. Plotinus is explaining how there can be an image of something sensible present to the perceiving subject, without the thing itself being physically present "in" the body.

In another treatise, Plotinus confirms this reading of 4.23:

The desiring part is in matter, and so, too, is the part which governs nutrition, growth and generation, which is the root and principle of the desiring and affective form. But it is not proper to any form to be disturbed or in any way affected, but it remains static itself, and its matter enters into the state of being affected, when it does so enter, and the form stirs up the affection by its presence. For, of course, the growth-principle does not grow when it causes growth, nor increase when it causes increase, nor in general, when it causes motion, is it moved.... So, then, the actual nature of the form must be an activity, and produce by its presence, as if the melody proceeding from it plucked the strings.²⁷

In the same treatise, and in other writings on the soul and sense-perception, Plotinus seems to present us at once with a different position, one which

²⁶ *Ibid.* 4.4.23.28-33.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 3.6.4.32-44.

emphasizes the active aspect of sense-perception.²⁸ Soul cannot be affected in quite the same way as the composite of soul and body. Soul in itself, as form, is static. Like the Stoics, Plotinus wants to say that affection begins in opinion—itsself based upon sense-perception—and never actually moves beyond that origin.²⁹ One must be attentive to the dual referent of the word “soul”, whether as separate, or as part of the composite. One could argue that this approach evades the whole issue of whether the soul as such perceives anything at all.

Thinking back to Aristotle, especially the final chapters of the third book of *De anima*, we see that sense-perception in the animal endowed with intellect is different from sense-perception in non-intellectual animals. For the former, judgment (*krisis*) is present and enters into play at every level of psychic activity. There is no purely animalistic sense-perception for a human being. Aristotle’s argumentative method in *De anima*, beginning from the lowest, most basic faculties of the soul, moving “upward” to separable intellect, deceives in this regard; it is with peril that many stop reading at 3.5, with the impression that he has laid out truly distinct “parts” of the soul—or at least separable psychic operations. In much the same spirit, Plotinus points out that perception must always be active to the extent that it must always be cognitive. Plotinus does not confuse knowledge and sense-perception, but rather shows their interconnectedness: “sense-perceptions are not affections but activities concerned with impressions (*pathemata*) and judgments; affections belong to... the body qualified

²⁸ See in addition to 3.6, “On the Impassibility of things without matter”, 3.8, 6.6, 6.7 and 6.9. Kevin Corrigan, in *Plotinus’ Theory of Matter-Evil and Question of Substance: Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander of Aphrodisias* (Peeters: Leuven, 1996) confirms our sense that Plotinus presents apparently contradictory positions on the nature of sense-perception; see pp. 134-145.

²⁹ *Enn.* 3.6.4.

in a particular way, but judgment belongs to the soul.”³⁰ Against Stoic, materialist conceptions of the mechanism of sense-perception, Plotinus denies that the soul can passively receive the impression of a sensible thing in the same manner that a bodily organ receives impressions. For judgment to occur, the soul must have some sort of impressions, but these will be of a non-physical nature.³¹

Looking back at the passage we quoted above concerning bodily organs as a mean between the extremes of soul and physical object, we need to ask whether Plotinus is speaking there of body *per se*, or of body as part of the soul and body composite. If the latter, we could not say that affections or sense-perceptions are ever simply “stamped” on the bodily organs, but rather that the whole person—that is, the self as soul using the body as its servant and instrument—perceives and is affected. This reading of Plotinus is possible given Plotinus’ appropriation of Aristotle’s understanding of judgment in perception. It is also necessary with respect to the principle that the parts of a composite being are made to cohere and act only by virtue of the presence of the higher, governing principle.

Memory

In the context of the problematical distinction between body and body-soul composite, we shall consider Plotinus’ remarks on the nature of memory. General observations will be made concerning relevant passages in the large treatise on the soul (4.3-4), and then we shall conclude with a detailed reading of the short treatise “On sense-perception and memory” (4.6).

³⁰ *Ibid.* 3.6.1. See also E.K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on Sense-Perception: A Philosophical Study* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988), pp. 121-124.

³¹ Corrigan (pp. 139-140) defends this view of sense-perception as truly realist (i.e. in which the thing sensed is directly apprehended) and not representationalist or solipsistic (i.e. in which the phenomenon of sense-organ stimulation is perceived).

Plotinus begins his lectures on memory by asking whether memory pertains primarily to sense-perception or to intellection.³² He concludes that the soul has two “image-making” powers, corresponding to the division of soul into higher and lower parts. Memory can similarly be divided into two sorts of functions. Plotinus is quite clear that memory, in the ordinary sense, pertains to what is temporal and divisible. He allows that the highest part of the soul may have a memory-like relationship to the intellect from which it proceeds, but this cannot be a relationship marked by temporal discursiveness. Instead, this would be a relation of potential (soul) to actual (intellect), and no temporal interval would come into play.³³ However, this is not the ordinary sense in which Plotinus speaks of memory. The nature of memory is determined rather by the characteristics of the “image-making” powers that are proper to the soul-body composite. Memory is therefore a proper function of the soul, in its qualified, composite dimension.

The memory of sense-perceptions and affections is consequently a model for the memory of thoughts. Plotinus says that there can only be a thinking of our thought when it is translated into a sort of image, even a verbal image:

Perhaps the reception into the image-making power would be of the verbal expression which accompanies the act of intelligence. The intellectual act is without parts and has not, so to speak, come out into the open, but remains unobserved within, but the verbal expression unfolds its content and brings it out of the intellectual act as if in a mirror, and this is how there is apprehension and persistence and memory of it. Therefore, even though the soul is always moved to intelligent activity, it is when it comes to be in the image-making power that we apprehend it.³⁴

³² The chapters on memory include 4.3.25 through 4.4.14.

³³ *Enn.* 4.3.25.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 4.3.30.

Plotinus is distinguishing between pure intellectual activity and what could be described as self-conscious thought; the former, something non-temporal and fundamentally ineffable, and the latter, the operation of memory as it makes thought possible for a self that is fundamentally divided. Memory in this picture mediates the transcendent (receptive) and the immanent (productive) in thinking. Augustine echoes this in his discussion of the production of an “internal word” for thought in *trin.*—except that, for Augustine, the transcendent mind is fully divine and not an aspect of the descended soul.

The model of sense-perception is normative for the body-soul composite because, as with Aristotle, thought requires the image-making capacity of *phantasia*. This position, moreover, is maintained by Augustine, for while he denies that phantasms must accompany the remembrance of thoughts, he insists on the necessity of “verbal images” in *trin.*³⁵

For Plotinus, the two aspects of thought are ideally not distinct. When the soul that is descended is in harmony with the soul that is undescended, they are one. Plotinus does not speculate about whether memory would be necessary in this picture, except as expressing the relationship of potentiality that would yet exist between soul and its particular intellect. There is no need for memory in the purely intelligible world, since “the intellectual act” is timeless (*achronos pasa noesis*) as unifying what is diverse.³⁶ It is evident that the stewardship of body by the soul is what makes memory foundational for understanding as well as for perception and affection.

³⁵ Cf. also *Ep.* 7.1.2. Augustine wishes, for example, to show that memory can bring things to mind without making the mind subject to them, as in the case of a powerful emotion; rather, they return to the mouth of the one remembering like cud, but without any taste (*conf.* 10.14.21).

³⁶ *Enn.* 4.4.1.

There is therefore a struggle for memory, whether it should be attuned to higher or lower things. Plotinus describes this in terms of a habit or disposition that can be formed and awakened.³⁷ Failing this, memory is a source of distraction. Plotinus seems to retreat from his stated position on the “location” of sense-perception in the soul when he describes memory as something that selectively sifts through the mass of bodily experiences, not permitting what is “irrelevant” to enter into the soul. We can conclude here, however, that he is speaking of the lower soul as a sort of guardian for the higher soul. When the soul is turned to the contemplation of higher things, memory is not even aware, he says, of sense-perceptions produced “in the soul.”³⁸ Though memory be necessary for sense-perception, it can perform this function mindlessly while simultaneously being trained for the apprehension of loftier realities. To be sure, Plotinus here seems to be describing contemplation as an extraordinary experience of contemplation, one which is ideal and not normative, as Aristotle might describe it. In other texts, the mystical language of ascent and union predominates. In such a case, memory in the ordinary sense ceases to be necessary for the operation of the mind.³⁹

In the activity of mind, Plotinus further observes that the soul does not actually remember itself. The soul possesses itself “secondarily”, in the sense that it becomes one with the objects of knowledge. If the soul were to think of itself, it would think something “empty.” Instead, the self is “included” in its knowledge, whether potential or actual, of all things. Thus, when self-aware, the soul is at once two and one: it loses itself in the discovery of the thing known, and finds

³⁷ *Ibid.* 4.4.4; “*diakeimai*.”

³⁸ *Ibid.* 4.4.8.

³⁹ Again, as Aristotle says in *De anima* 3.5 (430a23-24).

itself as the knowing subject. This “mystically” Aristotelian way of speaking is important to highlight because the sense of self-reflexivity developed by Augustine in the tenth book of *trin.* can be misrepresented as a species of pure self-relation, apart from any grounding in a knowledge of what is other; but Augustine excludes this interpretation fairly explicitly. Some scholars consider this a more Plotinian reading of Augustine, and we point out this passage in Plotinus in order to discourage such an interpretation.

Ennead IV.6: *On Sense-Perception and Memory*

This short text merits special attention for several reasons. It returns in a very concise manner to questions of sense-perception and the nature of memory, many of which have been considered in earlier texts. Moreover, it is very polemical in tone, engaging directly texts of Aristotle and other students of Plato. This is a negative, since Plotinus is a more careless reader—especially of Aristotle—when his objective is polemical. At times, he misconstrues Aristotle’s arguments, and in this case, he refuses to read the treatise *De memoria et reminiscentia* as having a limited goal within a much larger epistemological project. Nevertheless, when we take seriously Plotinus’ own philosophical debt to Aristotle, we can often see beyond a rhetorical posture to profound points of development along the lines of Aristotelian psychology. It also becomes clear that, for Plotinus, Stoic materialist epistemology is the greater enemy.

In the first section, Plotinus objects to the idea of sense-perceptions as impressions or stamps upon the soul. From this, it would follow that memory cannot consist of the recollection of impressions in the soul, since there would be no need to bring to mind again what is already indelibly present in the soul.

Plotinus is making a careful distinction. As we have seen, he will not allow that anything can be “stamped” on the soul *in the same manner* that it is stamped on a bodily organ. He wishes to avoid both the physicality and the passivity implied in this way of speaking. His objections try to prove this point.

Plotinus offers four objections. First, if sense-perceptions were impressions made on the soul, there would be no need for the soul to “look outside itself.” The soul would not need to play a role in perception in any active sense; the impressions would already be “there” within the soul. Second, he raises a question about the time elapsed because of the distance between the perceiver and the object perceived. It would be absurd to speak of there being a distance between the perceiver and the thing perceived if it were already impressed in the soul, and likewise absurd to suggest that any time had elapsed.⁴⁰ Third, he asks how the actual size of a thing could be comprehended given that it would be impossible for the dimensions, e.g. of a mountain range, to be reproduced within the soul of one person. Finally, he points out that, if all we perceive are the impressions stamped in the soul, then we will not be perceiving the actual thing at all.

These objections are more coherent as criticisms of Stoic, corporealist notions of sense-perception. Aristotle in fact first makes many of these objections.⁴¹ The second and third can be removed once we accept Plotinus’

⁴⁰ One problem with this objection proceeds from the fact that Plotinus says that sight, and likewise hearing, are instantaneous, cf. 4.5.6-7. The reason for this is that he considers light to be immaterial; Armstrong, in a note (4.5.7, p. 308), points out that the incorporeal nature of light is an idea taken from Aristotle, which provided “justification for his very free use of the symbolic language of light when speaking of spiritual activity.” I think it unjust to ultimately contrast this to Aristotle, for whom the physical description of light and the mechanism of sight was the model for intellectual illumination and abstraction. This way of speaking also points to the patristic language of spiritual senses, and the recurrence of the image of illumination for Augustine.

⁴¹ See *De anima* 2.5 on the clarification of potency and act in sensation, and 2.12 on how a form can be received without matter; cf. *De memoria et reminiscencia* 450a30-32.

position on the nature of sense-perception as a work of the soul as a composite with body, and not merely of the body (cf. above). Concerning the first objection, see n. 30 above. The first and fourth objections offer a challenge both to the idea of the active nature of the soul, and to the importance for Plotinus of the distinctness of the ruling principle from what is ruled.⁴²

In the second chapter, Plotinus presents his own position. The soul, he says, is not affected, but rather comes to know what is near it—presumably near to it by virtue of the presence of the sense organs which “mediate between two extremes.”⁴³ As we have seen, sense-perception is a messenger, and soul is the master of this messenger, not merely the possessor. Plotinus appeals to the example of hearing:

The impression is in the air, and is a sort of articulated stroke, like a letter written on the air by the maker of the sound; but the power (*dunamis*) and substance (*ousia*) of the soul does something like reading the impressions written on the air when they come near and reach the point at which they can be seen.⁴⁴

What is vexing about this explanation is the ambiguity of the term “near.”

Plotinus is emphatic about the non-location of soul, and its universal presence to physical bodies. The language of “nearness” subverts what could be a more precise description of how soul and the soul-body composite communicate. He is more clear when, after Aristotle’s example, he says that sense-perceptions are affections of the body (especially taste and smell), but that they are simultaneously acts of knowledge (*gnosis*) distinct from the affections when considered as perceptions and judgments (*krisis*). Aristotle says that in sense-

⁴² For this reason, he says that the perceiver and the thing perceived remain physically distinct.

⁴³ *Enn.* 4.4.23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 4.6.2.10-14. Note how the model of sight dominates this description of hearing, as Armstrong observes at n. 1, p. 325.

perception, the perceiver and the thing perceived remain distinct in order for perception to be possible, but that in knowledge, the knower and the thing known are identical.⁴⁵

Similarly, Plotinus says that “sense-objects are observed from outside, but the intelligibles in reverse come out, one can say, from within.” Both Plotinus, and Aristotle before him, have a conception of the “place” of knowledge as an interior space. Unlike Aristotle, however, Plotinus depends more on the imagistic implications of this interiority for explaining how knowledge occurs. This much follows in Augustine; but, unlike Augustine, Plotinus is more careful to avoid a simple soul-body dualism and antagonism in the sense that the body, operationally speaking, is really nothing apart from the presence of animating, ruling soul.

In the final chapter, Plotinus returns to the dual nature of memory. The soul, by means of memory, remembers intelligible things because it is identical with them, even if only potentially. In the case of sense-perception, the soul as active principle performs the necessary work: it brings things before its “eyes” since “its power is in travail (*odinouses*) towards them.” He offers several objections, parallel to those listed above, which chiefly argue against a conception of memory that presupposes a physical kind of impression upon the soul. If impressions were present in the soul in a physical sort of way, memory would not be necessary at all, neither would forgetting be possible, since the impressions themselves would be lying “ready to hand.”⁴⁶ Instead, Plotinus clearly locates memory in the soul, describing it as *habitus* or a power (*ischus*), which needs to be exercised in order to be improved. It can be trained to be more attentive to the

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *De anima* 419a12-14.

⁴⁶ *Enn.* 4.6.3.

apprehension of intelligible things, and less attentive to the images that it brings into the soul from without.

The negative relation of memory to embodied experience is confirmed by the understanding that Plotinus has of matter as a kind of becoming that is at heart nothingness.⁴⁷ In the hierarchical order of creation, matter is a product of the soul in a manner analogous to the production of soul out of *nous*. Plotinus' definition of time is closely associated with matter, since the descent of soul into the physical is a movement that actually gives rise to time.⁴⁸ The experience of dissolution, or distraction, granted to the soul-in-exile is rightly described as a ruthless series of temporal disjunctions: the soul is not really at home in this place, in this mode of being which is not "being" at all. This is not, however, the final word. The fall of the soul becomes the return of the soul, in that through memory, the temporal is ordered in such a way as to reveal some participation in *nous* through soul. But this is merely a moment, and one which is hopefully surpassed entirely by the individual soul.⁴⁹

To summarize, Plotinus sees memory as a power of the intellectual soul with two basic functions, one pertaining to *phantasia*, and therefore to the orderly retention of sense and verbal images, and the other pertaining to active recollection, the "bringing forth" of intelligible things in the mind. The latter concerns the forms, and is discursive, and therefore distinct from the mystical

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 2.5.4-5

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 3.7.1; see also 1.5, in which Plotinus makes an argument that seems contrary to what we have said about memory, namely, that it can be trained in such a way as to increase the well-being of a soul. 1.5 suggests that the passage of time, by its very nature, can only reveal the soul mixed up in the evil of temporal existence. Well-being simply is (for soul). These positions are reconciled by favouring the de-temporalizing ascent made by means of memory as the proper role for memory. See R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (Duckworth: London, 1983), pp. 157-170.

⁴⁹ See J. Trouillard, *La Procession Plotinienne* (Presses Universitaires: Paris, 1955). The problem with reading Plotinus selectively is clear throughout this discussion.

union and contemplation that is the final rest of the soul. The philosopher must cultivate the natural power of memory and train it to be consciously preoccupied with the “actualization” of intellect, often described as participation in *nous*. Confusion can arise because of the dividedness of mind in its undescended aspect, in which memory has no part, since the passage of time is not noted.

Memory is therefore single, but with two distinct functions. The ideal perspective on the lower function of memory could be described as benign neglect. Memory ought to serve the approach of soul to mind in likeness, but the life of the soul-body composite frustrates this. Memory is born of the experience of the embodied life, and in certain passages, Plotinus speaks movingly of the beauty of the dim physical “reflections” of the order of *nous*. These cannot even be compared in value to intelligible Beauty, and thus memory functioning in an ideal manner, turns away from the material to the intelligible in the hope of the reunification of soul with *nous*—and therefore in the hope of its own oblivion.

Conclusion to Part I

These three ancient writers are central representatives of the mainstream development of Platonism. Plotinus is a fruitful interpreter of both Plato and Aristotle, a beneficiary of their commentators, as well as an original source of metaphysical and religious teaching in his own right. Augustine's speculative roots cannot be explained by this tradition alone. First, we have not considered the influence of Stoic materialism on both Plotinus and Augustine, for reasons indicated in the introduction. Second, Augustine's appropriation of Platonism is mediated not simply through Cicero and doxographical writings, but through a variety of other authors more contemporary, some of whose writings are not well known. The influence of Porphyry is highly probable, but difficult to speak to with certainty for lack of original texts.⁵⁰ Of the greatest importance, surely, are Christian authors such as Ambrose; further speculations are invited, but rarely conclusive: an influence of Origen through Jerome⁵¹, Tertullian⁵², the actual writings (as opposed to the translations) of Marius Victorinus⁵³, Cyprian, Basil of Caesarea, and even Philo of Alexandria? Even in the case, however, of Ambrose, an atmosphere predominates that is altogether more exotic than in Augustine.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ The fairly measured position of J. O'Meara (*"Philosophy from Oracles" in Augustine* (Paris, 1959) should be read alongside P. Hadot's critique in "Citations de Prophyre à propos d'une recente ouvrage", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 2 (1960), pp. 204-244.

⁵¹ A. Bastiaensen, "Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins", in *Augustiniana Traiectina: Communications Présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht*, J. den Boeft and J. van Oort, eds. (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1987), pp. 42-44; A.-M. La Bonnardiére, "Jérôme, 'informateur' d'Augustin au sujet d'Origène", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 20 (1974), pp. 42-54.

⁵² See the entry by Frédéric Chapot in *Augustine Through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, pp. 822-824,

⁵³ P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1971); N. Cipriani, "Agostino lettore dei commentari paolini di Mario Vittorino", *Augustinianum* 38 (1998), pp. 413-28; N. Cipriani, "Le fonti cristiane della dottrina trinitaria nei primi dialoghi di S. Agostino", *Augustinianum* 34 (1994), pp. 253-312.

⁵⁴ See N. Cipriani's article, "Le opere di Ambrogio negli scritti di Agostino anteriori all'episcopato", *La Scuola Cattolica* 125/6 (1997), pp. 763-800; G. Madec, *Saint Ambroise et la*

Moreover, Augustine does not write as a philosopher—although this observation often proceeds from an impoverished sense of what philosophy meant to the ancients. Our objective in these chapters is to look at philosophical authors as part of a “history of ideas”, and not a series of direct, transmitted influences, in order to determine contexts for early speculation about the idea of memory. The tradition of reflection upon memory and sense-perception that we have described is largely taken for granted by Augustine. It is reasonable to maintain that the manner in which memory is used in *conf.* and *trin.* is wholly original. The early writings, which we shall now proceed to consider, demonstrate that Augustine has internalized a rich anthropology from a variety of philosophical and literary sources. The originality of the later writings does not depart from the content of the earlier, but rather develops their anthropological presuppositions in new ways appropriate to the genre and audiences of those texts, and with a more mature appreciation of the theological implications of these presuppositions. Hence we shall argue not only that Augustine inherits many elements of this philosophical tradition, but that he uses these elements for his own purposes in a manner fairly consistent throughout his career.

Plato is well known for the teaching of knowledge as recollection. We have shown that, isolated, this teaching wishes to account for the mind’s relationship to the forms. We have also shown that, throughout his writings, the idea comes to be central to a conception of dialectic that includes the vagaries of embodied life. The value of the body is admitted initially only grudgingly: Plato does not wish to say that its experience is of more than instrumental usefulness. By *Philebus*, the “mixed” life of virtue arguably has a place of more value than in

philosophie (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1974); A. Pincherle, “Ambrogio e Agostino”, *Augustinianum* 14 (1974), pp. 385-407.

Republic. In appropriating Gadamer's observation about recollection as dialectic, we are tracing a twofold shift. A recollection that had only an incidental relation to discursive intellectual operations, describing merely an *a priori* link to the forms of thought, becomes something demonstrable by a variety of modes of argumentation. Secondly, memory takes on a more metaphorical character as a principle intending to include both the multiplicity of sensible experience, and the simplicity of knowledge in the unity of the perceiving subject. Memory describes the ability of soul to mediate principles of measure and beauty. By this reading, Plato is closest to Augustine's own position.

For our purposes it is helpful to assume, as most of the Peripatetics and early Neoplatonists did, a deep doctrinal harmony between Plato and Aristotle. When Aristotle describes the active intellect as "the light of reason", does this not bring to mind the illumination of the intellect by the Good? It is only a disciplinary unwillingness by modern scholars to see that the completion of *De anima* in *Ethica* and *Metaphysica* 13 and 14 is mediated by the theology of *Metaphysica* 12 that prevents this reading. Aristotle enlists memory as a clear partner of the imagination. In doing so, he links intellectual operations to the formation of images, sensate and linguistic. Is there a transcendent conception of memory in Aristotle? His epistemological realism does not preclude this, but he does not describe it in such terms, partly in reaction to Plato, and partly because knowledge as pure, actual and in itself, does not include the passage of time. But this is not how knowledge actually occurs given the conditions of embodiment, and Aristotle is not as reluctant as Plato to find that the reality of body is determinative. It is indeed the case that Aristotle sees intellect as separable in principle, but he does not take this to be normative any more than Augustine takes

the vision at Ostia to be normative of the act of worship.⁵⁵ To behold the Good in a mystical ascent should be appropriately desired. The community at Cassiciacum as an instance of the Christian city is more than a compromise of this: as church, it is intended to be a realization of all that is contained in that vision. Augustine's vision is shared with his mother: they ascend together, all the while *loquens*. This moment is a taste of the peace of death that soon comes upon Monica. It is also a reminder that the continuity of the community of the church is not interrupted by the death of the body.

How very different this is from Plotinus' gentle flight "of the alone to the Alone." This may simply be a consequence of the loss of self in the transcendence of Intellect, to which Christian personalism can be contrasted.⁵⁶ The theological anthropology of Plotinus determines all else. As we have seen, he has a very sophisticated understanding of how sense-perception occurs, but the manner in which the soul perceives impressions and affections involves real difficulties. Plotinus is certain that the soul is the active principle at work in bringing to the soul all of its appropriate data. But for what end? The explanation is less clear than we would like. Soul lacks the receptivity of the passive element, at best coming "near" to what it perceives. Memory has both a lower sense that pertains strictly to sense-perception, and a higher sense pertaining to the retention of the forms. He, more clearly than Plato, calls memory a "habit" that needs to be cultivated and developed so that the soul becomes less mindful of the physical things that are below, and more attentive to the intelligible things above. This language is echoed powerfully by Augustine in *conf.* Reminiscent of the tri-

⁵⁵ *Conf.* 9.10.23.

⁵⁶ For a critical contrast, see A.H. Armstrong, "Form, Individual and Person in Plotinus", in *Dionysius* 1 (1977), pp. 49-68.

partite soul of Origen, memory as “habit” pertains only to soul in the lower sense, and does not pertain to mind which, for Plotinus, remains above. For Augustine, a memory of this “place” is necessary; but its achievement does not entail the obliteration of the remembering subject. Augustine is very much at home in the language of Plotinian anthropology. Nevertheless, he takes that anthropological tradition in a very different direction.

Where does this bring us with Augustine? In *conf.*, speculation at the anthropological level gives way to a cosmic reflection upon the nature of time and the implication of creation *ex nihilo*. The state of the microcosm compels reflection upon the macrocosm. In the early dialogues of greatest significance with respect to theological anthropology, to be considered in the next section, there is no intimation yet of the full significance that memory will have. The question of memory arises in the context of reflections upon the relationship between the soul and the body: their intimacy in acts of perception, their hostility with respect to spiritual purity. This picture in these texts is very complex. While we venture no new theories about particular texts of either Plato or Plotinus that Augustine may have read, within the limited model of historical doctrinal influence indicated above, we are arguing that Augustine inherits an impoverished picture of the teachings of Plato. He gratefully receives the “liberation” of the theory of forms, without much sense of Plato’s own resolution to the problem that they pose. We see him in these texts struggling with soul-body dualism, and with the influence of Christian wisdom from other sources—and needless to say, his own particular genius—he recognizes and seeks to overcome the anthropology that this ontology implies. Memory is central to this effort.

The early writings of Augustine are philosophically rich, and their interpretation fraught with difficult questions of genre. They also bear ample evidence of mature theological reflection, and we mean to read them accordingly. It is our intention with Augustine, much more than with the authors in this part, to be as true as possible to the argument of particular texts. An abstract approach (“what is Augustine’s position on *x*?”) is highly useful, but we mean to approach memory in particular, and psychology in general, with a desire to understand why memory arises at all in the particular *loci* that it does, and how these point ahead to its treatment in *conf.* and *trin.*

PART II:

AUGUSTINE'S EARLY WRITINGS

CHAPTER 4:
THE CASSICIACUM DIALOGUES
CONTRA ACADEMICOS, BEATA VITA, AND DE ORDINE

Augustine never looks at memory with the same sort of detail as do the philosophers considered in the first part. Like them, however, he raises the question of the status and role of memory at crucial moments of inquiry into the nature of wisdom, and the relation of sense-based knowledge to the same. The limitations of memory delineate the mode of the mind's apprehension of truth, since they reveal the grounding of the knowing subject in sensible experience. The significance of memory is fully acknowledged in the earliest dialogues, but its careful examination is continually deferred. For what does Augustine wait? An answer begins to emerge—intimated in *ord.*, more developed in *mus.*: he waits for time, the music and principle of creation, as the explicit context for the spiritual experience of embodied life, of life lived “within the bounds of memory.” In these dialogues, our minimal goal is to identify texts in which memory is raised. We shall also lay out the general anthropological picture within which the importance of memory is discussed. With respect to these goals, this part is continuous with the first part of the dissertation.

The fundamental concern of these dialogues is the nature of wisdom. In the first book of *Acad.* wisdom is defined as the knowledge of things human and divine.¹ This fruitful and provocative definition will stay with Augustine for some

¹ 1.6.16; cf. *Disputationes Tuscultanae* 4.26.57.

time, inspiring the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* found in *trin.*² Wisdom more than anything else is the guarantor of happiness; the possession of happiness, as the first book of *Acad.* also shows, is contingent on some sort of possession of truth. This idea is taken from a multitude of ancient sources, in particular, Cicero.³ Of course, for Augustine, the convergence of wisdom, happiness and truth point to their identity with and in the divine. This convergence is not fully developed until the final chapters of *beata u.* The question of truth and certitude in *Acad.* blossoms into a larger question of how one desires and obtains happiness in *beata u.*: the epistemological issue becomes a theological question of the mediation of truth as more than intellectual principle. *Ord.* takes up the same question on a cosmological scale: here, wisdom consists in the ability to recognize truth as a universal, cosmological principle: *ordo*. Mediation is effectively discerned at the level of the physical creature, in the reflected light of the trinitarian work of creation.

On the epistemological side, the initial question in *Acad.* about the sense in which truth can be “possessed” can be misleading. These texts leave us in a position of tension, a hopeful acceptance of an earthly state that is at best a possession but also a lack, a finding, and yet still a seeking. The manner in which the argument moves between knowledge of truth and desire for happiness reinforces this dialectic, since, as Augustine is fond of saying, we cannot love what we do not know; and yet, we cannot really know what we do not first love.

Thus L.F. Pizzolato writes:

² 13.1.1; 14.1.3: “*disputantes autem de sapientia, definierunt eam dicentes: sapientia est rerum humanarum divinarumque scientia. Unde ego quoque in libro superiore utrarumque rerum cognitionem, id est divinarum atque humanarum, et sapientiam et scientiam dici posse non tacui.*”

³ *Hortentius* (Fr. 36, Müller); *Disputationes Tuscularum* 5.10.28; *De natura deorum* 1.20.53; Seneca *Beata u.* 2.3; Plato, *Euthydemus* 278; see also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a1; 1178b8.

La conclusione del libro I del *Acad.* sembra essere una buona premessa al discorso del *bv*: “poiché tutti desideriamo la felicità sia che essa si possa ottenere solo con l’acquisizione (*inventa*) della verità sia con la sola diligente ricerca (*quaesita*) di essa, noi, se vogliamo essere felice, dobbiamo subordinare ogni altra aspirazioni e ricercare la verità.” Come si vede, ad Agostino nel *Acad.* preme dire che dalla tendenza alla felicità discende la necessità della ricerca del vero. Nel *bv* invece, dove il problema centrale è la natura della felicità, occorrerà stabilire anche in che senso il conoscere rende possibile la felicità. Insomma, mentre nel *Acad.* la felicità è funzionale a stabilire la necessità del problema gnoseologico, nel *bv* il problema gnoseologico è funzionale a quello eudemonologico. E se la *tensione verso* la felicità è un postulato che fonda la necessità della conoscenza (*Acad.*), un *discorso sulla* felicità (*beata u.*) postula un discorso gnoseologico.⁴

The development of this dialectic of seeking and finding is just one illustration of the continuity of purpose between these early dialogues and Augustine’s later writings, especially *conf.* There is no need to resurrect difficult questions of the historicity and writing of these texts. For our purposes, it is sufficient to say that the Cassiciacum dialogues are a youthful attempt on Augustine’s part to understand his faith in terms of his philosophical evolution and early pedagogical methods.⁵ The reverse is not an adequate position. The most insightful readings of these texts approach them in many ways as an incipient attempt at what was ultimately accomplished in the early parts of *conf.* (The role of Monica is of especial importance in this regard. For example, even as Augustine, with a

⁴ “Il *Beata u.* o la possibile felicità nel tempo”, in *L’opera letteraria di Agostino tra Cassiciacum e Milano*, ed. Giovanni Reala et al. (Edizioni Augustinus: Palermo, 1987), p. 85. See also A. Guzzo, “Agostino dal *Contra Academicos* al *De vera religione*”, in *Studi e Ricerche di Storia della Filosofia* 22 (Turin, 1957), p. 21.

⁵ *Beata u.* is described by Pierre Courcelle as “les premières *Confessions*”; cf. “Les premières confessions de saint Augustin”, *Revue des Études Latines*, 21/22 (1943/44), pp. 155-174. On the dialogues in general, see J.-J. O’Meara, “The historicity of the early dialogues of Saint Augustine”, *Vigiliae Christianae* 5 (1951), pp. 150-178; G. Madec, “L’historicité des *Dialogues de Cassiciacum*”, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 32 (1986), pp. 207-231; P. Cary, “What Licentius learned: a narrative reading of the Cassiciacum Dialogues”, *Augustinian Studies* 29:1 (1998), pp. 141-163. See all relevant articles in the collection edited by Giovanni Reala et al., in which Pizzolato observes (p. 33) that “I *Dialogi* (*sic*) sono da considerare sostanzialmente ‘storici’ e da studiare come un unico complesso. Né d’altra parte è possibile contraporre il dialogo come genere alla veridicità storica, se è vero che il dialogo aveva di per sé una riconosciuta funzione autobiografica.” See chapters below for further references on the dialogues in general.

measure of artifice, discovers trinitarian tropes of *modus* in *beata u.* 4.35, Monica is standing impatiently by to announce that Augustine has been speaking all along of Christian doctrine.) Augustine is probing the value of his own early pedagogical assumptions: he both exploits and critically uses his Stoic influences for his own purposes.⁶ He ultimately defends their value, to the extent that they can bring Licentius to the point of philosophical clarity.⁷ That this quasi-Socratic method is abandoned in subsequent writings can be largely attributed to Augustine's pastoral and apologetic demands as a churchman.

In these dialogues, as well as in *de libero arbitrio* 1, number is associated with wisdom in a variety of ways. *Acad.* uses number to introduce mathematical knowledge as a model of intellectual certitude.⁸ Augustine also argues that it is the influence of Pythagoras that takes Plato beyond Socratic ethics.⁹ The language of measure (*modus*) in *beata u.* carries the argument to its climax of mediation: wisdom as *modus*, the "mean" term between the extremes of fullness and want. The language of *ordo* in *ord.* similarly points to measure and number as principles embedded in creation. In these texts, from the perspective of the philosophical history detailed in the first section, we can see Augustine struggling with the limitations of the dualism that he has inherited from a partial picture of the Platonic tradition. Plato had to challenge the ability of the theory of the forms

⁶ N. Cipriani convincingly argues for the influence of Varro on *ord.* 2, observing that "the anthropological framework of the section of *De ordine* on the *artes* is clearly anti-Neoplatonic." See the entry on *Liberal Arts* in *Augustine Through the Ages: an encyclopedia* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1999) ed. Allan Fitzgerald, pp. 492-493.

⁷ And, as Gerard O'Daly points out, Augustine continued to use "skeptical arguments and method in his writings: they are found, for example, in his anti-Manichaean polemic from 388 onwards." He attributes the Stoic influence largely to Cicero, except of course for the idea that "the arguments of the New Academy were a device of Arcesilaus to protect genuine Platonic doctrine, to which Academic skeptics continued to subscribe esoterically." Cf. "The response to skepticism and the mechanisms of cognition", in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001), pp. 159-160.

⁸ 2.3.9

⁹ 3.18.41.

to explain the relation between the intelligible and the physical, and a reflection on the nature of number in *Philebus* grants him insight into the necessity of ontological mediation. At the moment where reason discovers that it has a “kinship” with number in *ord.* (2.19.48), it has an insight into the nature of intellectual activity that is a startling echo of the connection made between memory and dialectic in *Philebus*. Knowledge is both an ascent and a descent, figuratively speaking; it is a collecting and a dispersal, but in both cases, an act of seeking unity in all things, whether by gathering into one, or by comprehending what is multiple as whole. Plato transforms recollection into dialectic. Augustine is not quite at that point, but it is precisely at that moment in the argument of *ord.* that the question of memory is raised between Augustine and Licentius. We will show how Augustine is brought to the question of the nature of memory and its role in sense-perception and knowledge.

From truth to happiness

The three books of *contra academicos* frame the other two dialogues chronologically. This work is purportedly about Augustine’s attempt to convince those present, Licentius in particular, of the falsehood of the skeptical claim that a man cannot “perceive” (*percipere*) the truth, and therefore should not assent to anything. The specific question that moves the argument of the first book is whether a man can be happy if he does not possess the truth. Licentius, standing for what is presumably the position of the Skeptics, argues that a man can be happy if he is searching for the truth.¹⁰ Trygetius, closer to Augustine’s position,

¹⁰ *Acad.* 1.2.15. “*Quid hoc ipsum? inquam; existimatisne beatos nos esse posse etiam non inventa veritate? — Tunc Licentius: Possumus, inquit, si verum quaeramus.*” The Latin text of these three dialogues is taken from Volume 29 in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnholt: Brepols, 1970).

replies that it is only in the possession of truth that a man is made happy.

Trygetius will argue that a desire for the truth is different from possession, and therefore that a desire that springs from a lack is basically admission of a state of error.¹¹ To this, Licentius responds that withholding assent will preserve a man from error, since even a man who has not attained the truth can live according to reason.¹²

On the third day of debate, Augustine enters into the fray, defining wisdom for his friends as the knowledge of things human and divine. He defines human matters as what pertains to the virtues, and divine matters as the “hidden God himself” to which intellect “rarely reaches, and sense never.”¹³ Augustine adds to this:

I don't call anything 'knowledge' where the person who professes it is sometimes mistaken. Knowledge doesn't consist merely in the matters that are apprehended. Instead, it consists in the fact that they are apprehended in such a way that nobody should be in error about it or vacillate when pressed by any opponents.¹⁴

A measure of certitude is required in order for knowledge to be true. Licentius will reply by saying that happiness can result from the activity of the search for truth. Only at death will man possess true knowledge, and therefore “divine joy.” Licentius' language resonates with Augustine's: wisdom consists of a dialectic of the presence and absence of truth, or of “the good.” This idea is fully developed

¹¹ 1.4.10. “*Mihi, ait ille, nec secundum rationem vivere nec beatus omnino quisquis errat videtur. Errat autem omnis, qui semper quaerit nec invenit.*”

¹² 1.4.12-1.5.14.

¹³ 1.8.22. “*Iam res divinae cum omnibus concedentibus meliores augustioresque multo quam humanae sint, quo pacto eas ille adsequi poterat, qui quid esset ipse nesciebat, nisi forte existimans sidera, quae cotidie contemplamur, magnum quiddam esse in comparatione verissimi et secretissimi dei, quem raro fortasse intellectus, sensus autem nullus attingit?*” The translation of *c. acad* is by Peter King (Hackett: Indianapolis, 1995).

¹⁴ 1.7.19. “*Primo, inquit, ego scientiam non appello, in qua ille, qui eam profitetur, aliquando fallitur. Scientia enim non solum comprehensis sed ita comprehensis rebus constat, ut neque in ea quisquam errare nec quibuslibet adversantibus impulsus nutare debeat.*”

in these dialogues, and it recurs throughout his writings: hence *conf.* opens with a recognition that, while the soul is absent from God, nevertheless God is present to the soul. Who can seek after God who does not know God already? Yet how does the soul come to know God except by seeking?¹⁵

Licentius' position raises the question of what exactly constitutes knowledge. At 2.3.9, Augustine says that mathematical knowledge is a model of certitude, and this model abides throughout the dialogues.

I now declare to both of you: take care lest you think yourselves to know anything except only what you have learned in the manner in which you know that the sum of one and two and three and four is ten. Again, take care lest you think that in philosophy you will not know the truth or that it can't be known in this manner at all. Believe me—or rather, believe Him, for He says *Search and you shall find*—knowledge is not to be despaired of and it will be clearer than those numbers are.”¹⁶

There is an unresolved tension between this picture of knowledge and the implied ineffability of the divine, to the extent that truth is located in the divine life.¹⁷

Beata u. and *ord.* will collapse to the two parts of the definition of wisdom provided in *Acad.* The model of certitude provided here cannot apply broadly to either the knowledge of things human or divine: human acts, their relevant virtues and vices, cannot become a science in the manner of mathematics; nor can the divine be apprehended after the manner of a mathematical truth. At this point in

¹⁵ *Conf.* 1.1.1. *De Trinitate* concludes with the same trope: “O Lord my God, my one hope, hearken to me, lest through weariness I be unwilling to seek Thee, ‘but that I may always ardently seek thy face.’ Do thou give strength to seek, who hast made me find thee, and hast given the hope of finding thee more and more.” (15.28.51) Trans. W.G.T. Shedd in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series* (Series 1, Vol. 3) (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1988).

¹⁶ “*Sed nunc ambobus dico: cavete, ne quid vos nosse arbitremini, nisi quod ita didiceritis saltem, ut nostis unum duo tria quattuor simul collecta in summam fieri decem. Sed item cavete, ne vos in philosophia veritatem aut non cognituros aut nullo modo ita posse cognosci arbitremini. Nam mihi credite, vel potius illi credite, qui ait: quaerite et invenientis, nec cognitionem desperandam esse et manifestiorem futuram, quam sunt illi numeri.*” See also 3.11.25: “I think it’s now sufficiently clear what falsehoods seem to be through sleep and madness, namely, those that pertain to the bodily senses. For that three times three is nine and the square of rational numbers must be true, even if the human race be snoring away.”

¹⁷ Cf. *supra*.

Acad. Augustine is urging his interlocutors toward a more complex understanding of wisdom, one that will be more fully developed in *beata u.*¹⁸

The question of the precise nature of wisdom is therefore deliberately not answered in *Acad.* At 3.5.12, Augustine points out that the Academics do not want to say that the wise man knows nothing: they do not deny truth, but only that it has been found.¹⁹ At the conclusion of the text, Augustine says that the Academics may have in fact concealed their true teachings, thinking wisdom to be attainable, but not by the young, and certainly not by those who do not have an authoritative teacher.²⁰ Augustine may be teasing Licentius here; more likely he is requiring the reader to look beyond the surface of the pedagogical method of his own treatise.

Clarity comes when the language of the good (rather than the truth) as the thing sought points us to *beata u.* as the next step in the argument. "Possession" of the good in *beata u.* is understood in a broader manner, and it will develop the sense of "certitude" alluded to in *Acad.*

From modus to ordo

¹⁸ This is intimated at 3.17.37: "Plato added the knowledge of natural and divine matters, which he had diligently acquired from those I've mentioned, to Socrates' ethics with its wit and subtlety. He brought these components together under dialectic as their organizer and judge, since dialectic either is wisdom itself or that without which there can't be wisdom." (*Igitur Plato adiciens lepori subtilitatique (sic) Socraticae, quam in moralibus habuit, naturalium divinarumque rerum peritiam, quam ab eis quos memoravi diligenter acceperat, subiungensque quasi formatricem illarum partium iudicemque dialecticam, quae aut ipsa esset aut sine qua omnino sapientia esse non posset...*).

¹⁹ "De quo eos consulo, utrum negent, id est utrum eis placeat veritati assentiendum non esse. Numquam hoc dicent, sed eam non inveniri asseverabunt. Ergo et hic ex nonnulla parte socium me tenent, quod utrisque non displicet atque adeo necessario placet consentiendum esse veritati. Sed quis eam demonstrabit? inquirunt. Ubi ego cum illis non curabo certare; satis mihi est, quod iam non est probabile nihil scire sapientem, ne rem absurdissimam dicere cogantur, aut nihil esse sapientiam aut sapientiam nescire sapientem."

²⁰ 3.20.43. Looking ahead to *mag.*, we know this teacher to be Christ.

Beata u. argues that he who wills what is good, and possesses it, is happy.²¹ The Skeptics cannot seek what they do not have a will to find. Licentius has more difficulty maintaining that they will be happy even though they do not have what they desire.²² The possession of God, by definition in Chapter 11, is happiness, and this is further explained as a fulfilling of God's will, an "attention" to God, and a right mode of living. The non-possession of God is defined as a defect, or a state of unwisdom.²³ Augustine offers a fuller picture of the difference between these states by laying out a series of opposites.

iniquity (<i>nequitia</i>)	——	frugality (<i>frugalitas</i>)
not being (<i>non esse</i>)	——	being (<i>esse</i>)
poverty (<i>paupertas</i>)	——	riches (<i>divitiae</i>)
want (<i>egestas</i>)	——	fulness (<i>plenitudo</i>)

Citing Cicero's authority in *Pro Deiotaro*, Augustine seizes upon frugality as the "mother of all virtues." Cicero understands frugality to include "moderation and control" (*modestia et temperantia*).²⁴ Augustine subsequently departs from Cicero, collapsing the dichotomies and arguing that frugality is a mean, even a sort of unity, that foreshadows the *continentia* of *conf.*

Moderation indeed is derived from measure and temperance from *temperies*. For where measure is and temper, there is neither too much nor too little of anything. Plenitude, therefore, fulness itself, which we had placed opposite to want, we would use much more fittingly than abundance. For in abundance is understood an overflowing and, in a manner, the outpouring of a thing too rich. Which, when it comes forth beyond what is sufficient, there too is measure wanting; and the thing which is too much lacks measure... (therefore) both "too much" and "too little" are foreign to measure.²⁵

²¹ 2.10-11; translation by Francis Tourscher (Peter Reilly Company: Philadelphia, 1937), with some changes.

²² 2.14.

²³ 4.30. Cf. 4.29: "*Egestas enim verbum est non habendi.*"

²⁴ 4.31.

²⁵ 4.32. "*Modestia utique dicta est a modo, et a temperie temperantia. Ubi autem modus est atque temperies, nec plus est quidquam nec minus. Ipsa est igitur plenitudo, quam egestati contrariam posueramus, multo melius quam si abundantiam poneremus. In abundantia enim intelligitur affluentia, et quasi rei nimium exuberantis effusio: Quod cum evenit ultra quam satis est etiam ibi*

Modus ergo animi sapientia est. Measure, Augustine concludes, is the wisdom of the soul. The mean is now the goal of the man seeking wisdom, and the language of the virtues (one part of knowledge in *Acad.*) becomes an access to a knowledge of the divine (the other part of knowledge in *Acad.*). *Acad.* points to this conclusion in several places. For example, the long passage quoted above about mathematical knowledge as a model of certitude contains, and is followed by, wordplay upon the terminology of *modus*.

Let us now come to the matter at hand. Too late have I started to fear that this introduction exceeds its proper limit! This is no small matter, since measure is surely divine, but it is easy to make a mistake when it beckons so agreeably. I'll be more cautious when I am wise. (*Nunc ad propositum veniamus. Iam enim sero coepi metuere, ne hoc principium modum excederet, et non est leve. Nam modus procul dubio divinus est, sed fefellerit, cum dulciter ducit. Ero cautior, cum sapiens fuero.*)²⁶

In *beata u.*, the goal of the man seeking wisdom is no longer a superlative, but a mean, a measured middle position. This language certainly has a Stoic and Aristotelian resonance²⁷: *modus* brings happiness because it tempers the desires. It lends a stability of mind to the one seeking wisdom. The ethical dimension of this text, however, blossoms into a theological language in later chapters. Happiness comes from the "possession" of God (*habere Deum*): this does not mean an intellectual mastery, a single-minded goal, but rather a submission to a

desideratur modus, et res quae nimia est modo eget.... A modo autem et plus et minus aliena sunt."

²⁶ 2.3.9. I am of course suggesting a parallel here to the movement of the argument in Plato's later dialogues, especially *Philebus*.

²⁷ Pizzolato, p. 89. Recall also the conclusion to *Philebus* (61b-64), cf. *supra*.

providential order, a specific relationship with the God who is intimately present to the soul.²⁸

Later chapters introduce the idea of a *summus modus*. This principle is distinguished from truth (*veritas*), which literally “comes to be” through the *summus modus*, in a movement of descent from and return to the *summus modus*.

The image is clearly trinitarian:

But truth, in order that it may be, is realized through some supreme measure, from which it proceeds, and unto which, perfect, it returns.... (As) truth is formed in measure, so measure is known in truth: truth, therefore, never was without measure, and measure never was without truth. Who is the Son of God? It has been said—the Truth (cf. John 14:6). Who is it that has not Father, other than the Supreme Measure? Whosoever therefore comes to the Supreme Measure by the Truth is happy. This is to have God in the soul, that is, to enjoy God. For other things, though they are possessed by God, do not have God.²⁹

What is the relationship between *modus* in general and this *summus modus*? At the conclusion to *beata u.*, Augustine says to a silenced Licentius that *modus* is everywhere to be observed (*servandus est*) if “our return to God is in our heart (*cor*).”³⁰ This suggests a privileged sort of vision for those who “attend to” God, one that clearly includes the experience of the sensible world within its scope. This vision is enabled by something present not only in the mind, but in the “heart”: *cor* implies a middle position, anthropologically speaking, including intellect and will, mind and sense. Augustine is speaking of far more than an innate likeness between the mind and the divine “reasons.” In *ord.*, *modus* is

²⁸ Pizzolato writes (p. 90) that for Monica “*habere Deum* non è un *telos*, ma casomai un’*arche*, dato che il ‘possesso’ di Dio non è una conquista dell’uomo, ma un dato originario e ineliminabile della sua natura.”

²⁹ 4.34. “*Veritas autem ut sit, fit per aliquem summum modum, a quo procedit, et in quem se perfecta convertit.... Ut igitur veritas modo gignitur, ita modus veritate cognoscitur. Neque igitur veritas sine modo, neque modus sine veritate unquam fuit. Quis est Dei filius? Dictum est, Veritas. Quis est qui non habet Patrem, quis alius quam summus modus? Quisquis igitur ad summum modum per veritatem venerit, beatus est. Hoc est, animo Deum habere, id est, Deo frui. Cetera enim, quamvis a Deo habeantur, non habent Deum.*”

³⁰ On *cor*, see E. de la Peza, “El significado de ‘cor’ en San Agustín”, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 7 (1961), pp. 339-368; see also *trin.* 15.10.19: “*verbum est quod in corde dicimus.*”

ordo, and as such, it is the *creative* principle that connects the sensible and the intelligible, making the one discernible through the other.³¹ *Beata u.* only begins to describe how this comes to pass by introducing the language of illumination. A divine suggestion (*admonitio*), Augustine says, “descends” and is born within the soul, and by virtue of this God is brought to remembrance³²:

This brightness that unseen sun pours forth into our inmost vision. Everything that we speak of Him is true, even when, our eyes being as yet weak or suddenly opened, we are unsteady, reluctant to be converted boldly and to behold the entire truth. This again appears to be nothing other than God, perfect, by reason of no degeneration.
(*Hoc interioribus luminibus nostris iubar sol ille secretus infundit. Huius est verum omne quod loquimur, etiam quando adhuc vel minus sanis, vel repente apertis oculis, audacter converti, et totum intueri trepidamus: nihilque aliud etiam hoc apparet esse quam Deum, nula degeneratione impediante perfectum.*)³³

This chapter links the power of this interior light with the Holy Spirit, setting up a threefold process whereby the Spirit places in the heart both a desire (“*sitiamus*”) for truth and the means for seeking it. The Son, or the “Truth”, is the object of desire, and the thing enjoyed once possessed. Finally, union with the Supreme Measure is accomplished “through” possession of the truth. The text is describing a dynamic process that is trinitarian and interior, and strictly ordered in stages. The happiness of *Acad.*, the “possession of the truth”, is here described as the life of the Spirit. In an oracular outburst, Monica describes this life as the activity of faith, hope and charity. The Spirit alone, the illuminative “font” of divinity, is not

³¹ “Nel *De ord.* ai fattori extrarazionali preferiti nelle altre due opere si sostituisce il concetto di *ordo*, comprensivo dell’azione provvidenziale esercitata da Dio sul mondo: in questo caso la virtù consiste nella capacità dell’uomo di cogliere la nascosta presenza di questo *ordo*, mediante un concentrato ripiegamento su se stesso. La stessa contrapposizione espressiva, tipica delle altre due opere, viene assorbita: non si parla più di rapporto tra *virtus* e *fortuna/tempestas*, ma solo di *ordo* che la virtù può cogliere.” L.F. Pizzolato, “Il *Beata u.* o la possibile felicità nel tempo”, in *L’Opere Letteraria di Agostino tra Cassiciacum e Milano*, ed. G. Reale et al. (Edizioni Augustinus: Palermo, 1987), p. 39.

³² Note the etymology of the verb *recordor*.

³³ 4.35.

supposed to satisfy the one seeking wisdom, strictly speaking. It is not “abundance” that is required, but *modus*, the measured part. The Spirit, in dialectical fashion, includes the extremes; it is not, however, identical with them. Indeed, according to the model of *ord.* the “extremes” are identified with vice.³⁴ The *modus*, here standing for the person of the Son, subsumes the extremes as a mean. The *modus* and the *summus modus* are not hereby collapsed; on a practical level, Augustine is simply suggesting that participation in one is participation in the other. The Spirit and *modus* work together to reach the soul where and as it is, and effectively bring it to order. The result is not satisfaction—on the epistemic terms of *Acad.*—but an *activity* of contentment, or happiness.

However, so long as we seek, not yet satisfied by the font itself, to use that word “fulness”, let us acknowledge that we have not as yet reached our measure; and therefore, though God is our help, we are not yet wise and happy. This therefore is the full satisfying of souls, this is the Life of contentment—to know piously and perfectly by whom you may be brought to the Truth, which Truth you may enjoy, by which means you may be united to the Supreme Measure. Which three things show forth to those who understand One God and One Substance, shutting out the vanities of varying superstition. (*Sed tamen quamdiu quaerimus, nondum ipso fonte, atque, ut illo verbo utar, plenitudine saturati, nondum ad nostrum modum nos pervenisse fateamur: et ideo, quamvis iam Deo adiuvante, nondum tamen sapientes ac beati sumus. Illa est igitur plena satietas animorum, haec est beata vita, pie perfecteque cognoscere a quo inducaris in veritatem, qua veritate perfruaris, per quid connectaris summo modo. Quae tria unum Deum intelligentibus unamque substantiam, exclusis vanitatibus variae superstitionis, ostendunt.*)³⁵

Memory in De ordine

De ordine speaks to the claim at the conclusion of *beata u.* that *modus* (or *ordo*) is everywhere to be observed, if “our return to God is in our heart.” The argument unfolds at the cosmic level as a question of divine governance, and at the epistemological level as a matter of the relation of sense-perception to

³⁴ 1.8.23.

³⁵ 4.35.

knowledge. A tension runs throughout the text as to the status of the sensible, and this tension is resolved—although not with finality—by the invocation of memory and the *artes liberales*.³⁶

In this work, Licentius is made to defend the true position, namely, that order is present in all things, and that nothing occurs as the result of chance. Those who make this error are pre-occupied with sense-perception, and more precisely with their particular perception of things: to look at creation is like viewing a mosaic, Augustine says, and we must step back from it in order to see the unity and beauty of the whole.³⁷ Even if the particular causes of an event are not discernible, a pattern of causality is nevertheless evident to the mind. Licentius arrives at this insight on his own, much to Augustine's delight, and he exclaims that "order encompasses all", having no opposite, since even error (and by implication, evil) has some cause.³⁸ While Augustine is careful to say that God is not responsible for evil, he does argue here that evil is a part of the whole, even if God despises it.

And [God] greatly loves order, precisely because by it He loves not evils. But how can evils themselves be "not in order", although God does not love them? Now this itself is the order of evils: that they be not loved by God.... This very thing He loves: to love good things, and not to love evil things—and this itself is a thing of magnificent order and of divine arrangement. And because this orderly arrangement maintains the harmony of the universe by this very contrast [between good and evil], it comes about that evil things [lesser goods] must need be. In this way the

³⁶ See J. Doignon "Le *Ord.*, son déroulement, ses thèmes", in *L'Opera Letteraria di Agostino tra Cassiciacum e Milano* (Edizioni Augustinus: Palermo, 1987), pp. 136-146 on the liberal arts in this text; also *infra*.

³⁷ *Ord.* 1.1.2. Latin text is from *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* Vol. 39 (Brepols: Turnholt, 1970); we are using the English translation, with some modifications, from the "Fathers of the Church" series, rendered as *Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*, trans. Robert P. Russell (CIMA Publishing: New York, 1948). The role reversal of Licentius at this point in the text may pertain to the recurring presence of poetry throughout these texts, and the extent to which the liberal arts are affirmed in *ord.* as a legitimate way to behold order in creation.

³⁸ 1.1.6.

beauty of all things is in a manner configured, as it were, from antitheses, that is, from opposites: this is pleasing to us even in discourse.³⁹

The order that is present in creation is discerned at two levels, and here the abovementioned tension is exposed. The perception of the beauty and unity of the whole is described as a kind of self-knowledge, or a habit of withdrawing from the senses and the multiplicity of the sensible.⁴⁰ Unity is something perceived within. Licentius accordingly describes the happy life as a conversion from the “uncleanness” of the body to a life of virtue.⁴¹ The liberal arts are marshalled to this cause:

If you have a care for order, I replied, you must return to those verses. Instruction in the liberal arts, if only moderate and concise, produces devotees more alert and steadfast and better equipped for embracing truth, Licentius, so that they more ardently seek and more consistently pursue and in the end more lovingly cling to that which is called the happy life.⁴²

Other men, Augustine says, are content with the “name of the most high God, and with their sense faculty”, and they live wretchedly. They live, indeed, but they do not have the happy life. However, immediately following this discussion, the

³⁹ 1.7.18. “*Et ordinem ideo multum diligit, quia per eum non diligit mala. At vero ipsa mala qui possunt non esse in ordine, cum deus illa non diligit? Nam iste ipse est malorum ordo, ut non diligantur a deo.... Hoc ipsum enim diligit, diligere bona et non diligere mala, quod est magni ordinis et divinae dispositionis. Qui ordo atque dispositio quia universitatis congruentiam ipsa distinctione custodit, fit, ut mala etiam esse necesse sit. Ita quasi ex antithetis quodam modo, quod nobis etiam in oratione iucundum est, ex contrariis, omnium simul rerum pulchritudo figuratur.*” Augustine will not tend to use this way of speaking of evil in his later writings, although many other Christian thinkers will, eg. St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa contra Gentiles* 3.10-17.

⁴⁰ *Ord.* 1.1.3-1.2.3.

⁴¹ 1.8.23. “And what else is the process of conversion but to uplift oneself wholeheartedly by virtue and temperance from the excess of vices?”

⁴² 1.8.24. “*Si ordinem, inquam, curas, redeundum tibi est ad illos versus. Nam eruditio disciplinarum liberalium modesta sane atque succinta et alacriores et perseverantiores et comptiores exhibet amatores amplectendae veritati, ut et ardentius appetant et constantius insequantur et inhaereant postremo dulcius, quae vocatur, Licenti, beata vita.*” On the liberal arts, see the entry of N. Cipriani in *Augustine Through the Ages: and encyclopedia*, ed. Allan Fitzgerald (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2001); Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1992), pp. 24-26; I. Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 1984); H.-I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (E. de Boccard: Paris, 1958). On the later Augustinian tradition, see R.D. Crouse, “Honorius Augustodunensis: the Arts as *via ad patriam*”, in *Arts Libéraux et Philosophie au Moyen Age* (Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin: Paris, 1969), pp. 532-539.

assembled depart for the baths, but are waylaid by the sight of a cockfight.⁴³

Beholding this, Augustine marvels at the many aspects in which “governing reason” is manifest in the sensible creature, its constitution and its behaviour.

This is the proof, he says, that order is present at the lowest levels, and manifest to the senses. Moreover, in the concluding chapters of the second book, Augustine affirms that the liberal arts include astrology, music, geometry, all of which concern the search for the underlying unity of what is perceived through the senses.⁴⁴ The liberal arts reveal not only the *ordo docendi* but also the *ordo naturae*, or the *ordo divinae providentiae*.⁴⁵ As such, the progress of liberal education is a kind of awakening and remembering—that is, assuming that one is mindful of the following.

The sensible has an ambiguous status: it might be a way to discern the divine order for those who are mindful of God, and who have applied themselves to the liberal arts in order to correct ordinary false impressions. At the same time, the sensible is something to be scorned, and “converted” from. This tension remains alive throughout the second book of *ord.*, in which the original question is reformulated as follows: how can that which is variable, or mutable, be with God? The question here has an epistemological dimension: how we do hold together the sensible and changing with the fixed truths perceived by the intellect? Licentius interrupts this query by insisting that memory is purely passive and looks only to the sensible. Memory is not necessary for accurate sense-perception, he says, since perception is “immediate.” Augustine replies, saying that memory is

⁴³ 1.8.25-1.8.26. Compare this passage to Augustine’s frustration with his own tendency to be distracted, e.g. in *conf.* 10.34.52.

⁴⁴ One can see how the conclusion of *ord.* points to the writing of the treatises on the liberal arts; this project, of course, was ultimately abandoned.

⁴⁵ 2.5.15. “*Haec et alia in hominum vita cogunt homines plerumque inpie credere nullo nos ordine divinae providentiae gubernari.*”

necessary for instruction, and for the preservation of learning in general: scientific knowledge, and even contemplative wisdom, is subject to the discursiveness of language. Licentius insists that to know God is to be with God, and that sense has nothing to do with this.⁴⁶ Augustine responds:

“Then”, I said, “you are asserting not only that a wise man does not consist of a body and a soul, but even that he does not consist of an integral soul, for only a senseless person would say that the part by which he uses the senses does not pertain to the soul. It is not the eyes and ears that perceive, but something or other that perceives through the eyes.”⁴⁷

Licentius further argues that the wise man does not require memory in order to know God, since he “has everything in front of the interior eyes of the intellect [and therefore] gazes fixedly and immovably on God, with whom are the things that the intellect can see and possess.”⁴⁸ Augustine says that this is *close* to his own position, but he reiterates for Licentius the importance of memory for instruction, and the obligations that a wise man has to his community in the cultivation of his memory on their behalf. The content of memory in this case is vague, and may be inspired by Cicero’s idea of the broadly educated teacher of citizens.

More importantly, he suggests that memory makes wisdom possible in some manner, and that a wise man must store up some of his “treasure” over and above what is required for instruction. Licentius however is not convinced, and he insists that the man who requires memory for knowledge is a servant, and not a master, and that the function of memory does not manifest any *ratio* at work, but at best points to a higher intellectual principle. For Licentius, memory is

⁴⁶ 2.2.5.

⁴⁷ 2.2.6. “*Negas ergo, inquam, non solum ex corpore et anima sed etiam ex anima tota constare sapientem, si quidem partem istam, qua utitur sensibus, animae esse negare dementis est. Non enim ipsi oculi vel aures sed nescio quid aliud per oculos sentit.*”

⁴⁸ 2.2.7.

exclusively and essentially linked to body, and manifests a rational operation only accidentally. At the conclusion of Chapter 2, the matter is explicitly delayed for consideration in some other text, with Augustine in disagreement with Licentius.

The question of the nature of memory is appropriately raised in *ord.* in the context of a comparison between sense-perception and understanding.⁴⁹

Augustine distances himself from a position that holds memory to be purely passive and merely receptive to what is taken in through the sense-organs. He sees the soul as that which senses, but that requires the body as a tool in this endeavour: it is an activity of the soul, not merely a *passio corporis*.⁵⁰ The mind perceives what is simple, and it can only make sense of what is subject to time if it can itself be extended in time while remaining unified. The role of memory in understanding is not developed more fully until *an. quant.* and *mus.* Memory acts as a tool for the mind, gathering what is “scattered” into a comprehensible unity. The supposed divergence between the positions of Licentius and Augustine concerns the necessity of experience as a teacher for the increase of wisdom. Augustine only points here to the inadequacy of Licentius’ position as pertaining to a poorly integrated picture of the unity of soul and body.

The second book of *ord.* proposes an intermediate function in which memory looks to both intellect and sense-perception at the level of *cor.* The liberal arts are affirmed as necessary for human action and production, for the languages of instruction, and for providing pleasure (i.e. as derived from the contemplation of the beauty of things).⁵¹ They map out a ladder of ascent, as it

⁴⁹ As in *conf.* 11, the larger context of the question is the ontological issue of the relation of the changing to the unchanging.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Gn. litt.*, 3.5.7: “*sentire non est corporis, sed animae per corpus.*”

⁵¹ 2.12.35.

were, by which the mind is purged of false ideas, through the sensible to the intelligible principles of natural things. Through this ascent, the soul desires to possess truth and enjoy happiness, both of which are the result of a soul rightly ordered to God. Augustine is careful with his language: “delight *of* the sense is one thing; delight *through* the sense is something else. Graceful movement delights the sense, but the timely import of the movement delights the mind alone through the sense.”⁵² The soul that is rightly ordered can use the arts as a way to discern divine order in the sensible, and take joy in it.

Augustine further emphasizes the importance of not only dialectic, but of rhetoric, since instruction must move the emotions and not only the intellect. This is appropriate, since not only truth but also beauty is the object of the arts and sciences.⁵³ The acquisition of knowledge is therefore not an abstract, disembodied process. It includes the whole person as the inquiring subject—sense and intellect—and therefore the whole creation—sensible as well as intelligible—as its object. Augustine’s concern here to emphasize the unity of the human person is part of a deliberate move to qualify the Platonic anthropology implied in *Acad.* in consequence to the ontological picture in *ord.*⁵⁴

The conception of learning in *ord.* must be read alongside a passage describing the twofold function of knowledge, both as synthesis and analysis, an ascent and a descent, with unity (or “one”) as the summit. The soul here has realized the kinship of reason and number, and “soliloquizes thus”:

⁵² 2.11.34. “*Aliud ergo sensus, aliud per sensum; nam sensum mulcet pulcher motus, per sensum autem animum solum pulchra in motu significatio.*” This language is very close to *mus.*, except that the anthropology sounds less dualistic in that the “delight” of the mind and the senses are explicitly connected through a shared *ordo*.

⁵³ 2.13.33, 2.13.34, and 2.18.51.

⁵⁴ V. Pacioni, *L’unità teoretica del de ordine di S. Agostino* (Millenium Romae: Rome, 1996), p. 177. See also the image of the soul as the captain of a ship in *ord.* 2.6.18.; also 2.11.31 (Pacioni, p. 220).

“By some kind of inner and hidden activity of mine, I am able to analyze and synthesize the things that ought to be learned; and this faculty of mine is called reason.” As a matter of fact, what ought to be analyzed except what is reputed to have unity, but either has no unity whatever, or has less of it than it is believed to have? And, likewise, why must something be synthesized, unless in order that it become *one*, in so far as it is capable? Therefore, both in analyzing and in synthesizing, it is oneness that I seek, it is oneness that I love. But when I analyze, I seek a homogeneous unit; when I synthesize, I look for an integral unit. In the former case, foreign elements are avoided; in the latter, proper elements are conjoined to form something united and perfect. In order that a stone be a stone, all its parts and its entire nature have been consolidated into one.⁵⁵

In every case, the object of knowledge is order, or unity. There are deep resonances in this passages both with Plato's *Philebus* and with the distinction Aristotle makes in the parts of abstraction: the composite as the thing perceived, the simple form as the thing known. There is also a profound harmony of interior and exterior—although this dichotomy is not stressed as much as in later writings. Through philosophy—which, of course, has a higher place than the *artes liberales*⁵⁶—and the *artes* themselves, the apprehension of the sensible is a means for the perception of a unity and order that is entirely immanent. In declaring unity in its particular way, the sensible is not merely “variable.” Thus there is a meeting of the *ordo* that is within the soul and the proper object of the intellect, and the *ordo* that is “everywhere to be observed” in the created world. It is clear from the passage quoted above, however, that there are not two *ordines* at all, but one *ordo* which is variously described in these dialogues as truth, *ratio*, measure,

⁵⁵ 2.19.48. “Ego quodam meo motu interiore et occulto ea, quae discenda sunt, possum discernere vel conectere et haec vis mea ratio vocatur. Quid autem discernendum est, nisi quod aut unum putatur et non est aut certe non tam unum est quam putatur? item cur quid conectendum est, nisi ut unum fiat, quantum potest? Ergo et in discernendo et in conectendo unum volo et unum amo, sed cum discerno, purgatum, cum conecto, integrum volo. In illa parte vitantur aliena, in hac propria copulantur, ut unum aliquid perfectum fiat. Lapis ut esset lapis, omnes eius partes omnisque natura in unum solidata est.”

⁵⁶ 2.18.47. By Cipriani's account (*op. cit.*), Augustine is following Varro's organization of the liberal arts, in which philosophy, by virtue of its relation to physics, is subsumed by astronomy. This is not ultimately indicative of Augustine's own understanding of the nature and role of philosophy.

mean, and finally, unity. Why memory arises in the context of this discussion is not made explicit. However, we have observed that the position of Licentius is based upon an overly dualistic anthropology. The consequence of this is a failure to appreciate the significance of memory for both sense-perception and thought. The idea of the "integral soul" indicated by Augustine moves us to consider subsequent dialogues, with the intention of eliciting the role of memory in explaining the unity of the human person.

Conclusions

Though the chronology of these early dialogues has been observed, it is not nevertheless an easy matter to conclude with the second and third books of *Acad.* This text does not seem an adequate frame for *beata u.* and *ord.*. By the middle of third book, it is clear that the philosophical challenge posed by the Skeptics, and by the boy, Licentius, on their behalf, is not very substantial. Augustine concludes *Acad.* by telling his listeners that the Academics likely concealed their true teachings anyhow: perhaps they wanted to preserve wisdom from those too young to receive it. Perhaps their true teaching was Platonism!⁵⁷ However we define wisdom, Augustine says, in making it unattainable, the Skeptics make philosophy unattractive.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Acad.* 3.20.43. A jocular tone is sustained in *Soliloquia* 1.4.9 (trans. T.F. Gilligan): "Reason: When you say this, are you not afraid of the Academicians? Augustine: Not at all. For they do not want the wise man to make a mistake; but I am not wise. Hence, I still am not afraid to claim a knowledge of those things which I know. But if, as I desire, I arrive at wisdom, I shall do what wisdom teaches me."

⁵⁸ 3.9.19.

Even Cicero does not escape Augustine's rebuke.⁵⁹ In the end, Augustine allies himself with what he calls "Platonism." Though he affirms the reliability of the senses⁶⁰, he alludes to the middle Platonic teaching that the senses only give rise to opinion.⁶¹ He clearly promotes the two-world ontology of Plato's early middle dialogues, finding the sensible to be an image of the intelligible, and therefore "truthlike" at best.⁶² He declares that Plato is "alive again" in Plotinus, and presumably Platonism's positing of an intellectual dimension, distinct from the sensible, has answered the dilemma of the Skeptics.

The playful tone with which the dialogue concludes casts a curious shadow over the group of these three texts. He does, however, end with an appeal to the authority of Christ. He points to the Incarnation as the solution to Platonism's inadequacy:

Yet the most subtle chain of reasoning would never call back to this intelligible world souls that have been blinded by the manifold shadows of error and rendered forgetful by the deepest filth from the body, had not God the Highest, moved by a certain compassion for the multitude, humbled and submitted the authority of the Divine Intellect even to the human body itself.⁶³

The image of the descent of God into the sensible resonates with the two-world picture which Augustine embraces. In the context of *ord.*, the action of the Incarnation describes a marriage and reconciliation of the corporeal and the intelligible. Our souls, Augustine says, are "awakened not only by [Christ's]

⁵⁹ 3.16.35. On Cicero and Platonism, see J. Doignon, "Problèmes textuels et modèles littéraires dans le livre I du '*Ord.*' de saint Augustin", in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 24 (1978), pp. 77-78.

⁶⁰ 3.11.25.

⁶¹ 3.11.26. Augustine says that he will discuss this matter "later", possibly meaning the conclusion in 3.17.37.

⁶² 3.17.37. Here is another example of the playful manner in which Augustine is appropriating the language of the Skeptics.

⁶³ 3.19.42. Note that in the *retractationes* Augustine does not distance himself from the language he uses throughout to describe the senses or the body; he only regrets that he did not distinguish between the senses of the body, and the "spiritual senses" (cf. 1.3.2-1.3.3.).



precepts, by also by [his] deeds”, by his verbal and visual example.⁶⁴ A providential *ordo* is seen by those who are made fit not by the liberal arts, but by the example of Christ’s humility. *Beata u.* as well concludes with a powerful trinitarian image of the *modus* as the Son descending to the soul, so that it may bring the soul into union with the *summus modus*. These images, however, do not seem to enter into the argument of the third book of *Acad.* The formula of (Platonism + the Incarnation) finds its most simplistic form here for Augustine.⁶⁵ This may speak against an excessive concern for reading *Acad.* as a divided text.

Ord. suggests an intermediate function for memory as necessary for the gathering of what is multiple into what is unified (synthesis) and for the comprehension of the composite as multiple and whole (analysis). This much is evident, even though the question of the precise status of memory with respect to sense-perception and knowledge has clearly been deferred for later consideration. *An. quant.* provides some of the theoretical basis for this. We do, however, agree with Pacioni that *ord.* is the dialogue that should guide the reading of the “Cassiciacum” group of texts.⁶⁶ It alone provides a cosmological framework for the anthropological picture emerging within them.

⁶⁴ *Acad.* 3.19.42

⁶⁵ The enigmatic elements of *Acad.* 3 become more transparent with scholarly work on Augustine’s pedagogical motivations with respect to his Stoic authorities.

⁶⁶ In *L’unita teoretica del de ordine di S. Agostino* (Millenium Romae: Rome, 1996), especially p. 338.

CHAPTER 5:
THE "MIDDLE EARLY" DIALOGUES
SOLILOQUIA, DE IMMORTALITATE ANIMAE
AND *DE ANIMAE QUANTITATE*

Soliloquia is a dialogue of transition. The first book gathers many elements from the Cassiciacum dialogues into a theologically rich consideration of how the soul approaches God, by knowledge and by likeness. This book concludes with questions about how the soul possesses attributes. These questions arise out of Augustine's problematic but fruitful pre-occupation with a language of spiritual "location": where is God? where is the soul? where is truth? Everything, Augustine says, that exists must exist somewhere, and truth must therefore exist somewhere.¹ In the second book of *sol.*, in *de immortalitate animae* and in *de animae quantitate*, Augustine attempts, with varying degrees of success and elegance, to prove the immortality of the soul.² The eternity and specific "location" of truth is the linchpin of the argument for immortality. That truth is made to be an attribute of the soul would seem to be its flaw. Attention to

¹ *Sol.* 1.15.29. Clearly this is a problematic language when speaking of something immaterial and therefore by definition immutable. Augustine will recognize this in *mus.* 6.

² It is now generally accepted that *imm. an.* is intended to complete *sol.*; this thesis is that of Martin Grabmann, in *Die Grundgedanken des Hl. Augustinus über Seele und Gott* (J.P. Bachem Verlag: Köln, 1916), p. 68, n. 5. Most scholarship on *imm. an.* argues that Augustine had Plotinus' *Ennead* 4.7 before his eyes; cf. Gérard Verbeke, "Spiritualité et Immortalité de l'âme chez Saint Augustin", in *Augustinus Magister I* (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1954); Richard Penaskovic, "An Analysis of Saint Augustine's '*De immortalitate animae*'", *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), pp. 167-76. John Maurant largely seconds Augustine's wish that this dialogue had never been published; he argues that it is "wholly philosophical" (as contrasted with other early writings), "devoid of all religious content", and generally undialectical. He speculates that, around the time of his baptism, Augustine was anxious about the issue of the resurrection of the body, and might have thought that the immortality of the soul would guarantee a certainty of bodily resurrection; cf. "Remarks on the *De immortalitate animae*", *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), pp. 213-217; also, *Augustine on Immortality*, (Villanova University Press: Villanova, 1969). There is very little literature on *De animae quantitate* as a whole, although mention is often made of the seven "steps of the soul" in Ch.33.

the ontological framework will shed a congenial light on that aspect of the argument.

These dialogues have a larger project by which Augustine is seeking to purge his own conception of the soul of materialistic language. The “two-world ontology” of the middle Platonic writings with which *contra academicos* concludes declares Augustine’s confidence in a correspondence between intellect and truth, and sense-perception and falsehood (or mere opinion). However, by the end of *an. quant.*, Augustine identifies idolatry, and not Manichaean materialism, as the error against which he (and the Church) speaks. Confronted with dualism as a spiritual problem, Augustine is mindful of the limitations of simple dualistic formulations.³

Explicit references to memory are rare in these texts. The question of recollection and how learning occurs is once again explicitly deferred; in *an. quant.* 20.34, he writes:

I do not know of one more important [question] on which our views are so diametrically opposed. For, while in your view the soul has brought no art with it, in mine, on the other hand, it has brought every art; for to learn is nothing else than to recall and remember. But, do you not see that this is not the right place to investigate that point?⁴

³ Goulven Madec renders the over-arching problematic in more theological terms as the “découverte du spiritualisme”, with reference to a passage in *conf.* 6.3.4 (trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin: “I learned that your spiritual children... do not understand the words *God made man in his own image* to mean that you are limited by the shape of a human body... and I could not form the vaguest idea, even with the help of allegory, of how there could be substance that was spiritual.”) Cf. “Le spiritualisme augustinien à la lumière du *de immortalitate animae*”, in *L’Opera Letteraria di Agostino tra Cassiciacum e Milano* ed. Giovanni Reale *et al.* (Edizioni Augustinus: Palermo, 1987), p. 180.

⁴ “*Et qua nescio utrum quiquam maius sit, quaestionem moves, in qua nostrae sibi met opiniones adversantur, ut tibi anima nullam, mihi, contra, omnes artes secum attulisse videatur; nec aliud quidquam esse id quod dicitur discere quam reminisci et recordari.*” Trans. John J. McMahon, in Vol. 2 of the *Writings of Saint Augustine* (Fathers of the Church: New York, 1947).

In *sol.* 2.19.33, Augustine asks how learning (*disciplina*) perpetually abides in the soul, even of the unlearned. Reason replies, saying that “this question requires another book, if you want it discussed thoroughly.”⁵

As to the function of memory within an epistemological framework, we can infer certain details about its relation to sense-perception in these texts. We shall lay out exactly such a framework, noting especially the emerging importance of illumination; then, we shall note significant passages concerned with memory, in context.

Creation as a hierarchy of excellence: illumination

Considering these three works together allows us to see them as framed by the theological virtues of *sol.* 1, and the seven steps or acts of the soul’s power in the conclusion of *an. quant.* Augustine is very clear that he has undertaken an explication of the teaching of the Church⁶, and of true religion.⁷ These texts describe knowledge in terms of the vision of the soul. The images used to describe the illuminative power of God, and the steps required in order to attain a contemplation of God, suggest a process of ascent: the language is reminiscent of the manner in which the liberal arts describe a program of learning in *ord.* Here, faith, hope and charity are actively necessary to the soul’s search for God.⁸ Together, all three in specific ways heal and strengthen the impaired “natural” vision of the mind, and place in the soul the desire for its *patria*: this idea should

⁵ “*Aliud ista quaestio volumen desiderat, si eam vis tractari diligenter.*” Trans. Thomas F. Gilligan (Cosmopolitan: New York, 1943). Again, this seems to be a reference to *mag.*

⁶ *An. quant.* 33.76.

⁷ *Ibid.* 36.80. The question remaining at the conclusion of *an. quant.* is that of the free will, and the ability of sin to separate the soul from the truth; hence, this text points to the first book of *lib. arb.*

⁸ *Sol.* 1.6.12-7.14.

be compared to the trinitarian influence described in *beata u.* (4.35) ; at the same time, these virtues describe a process of approach, or ascent, that ends with faith and hope abandoned—their purposes being fulfilled—and the life of charity fully enjoyed.⁹ Thus the seven steps of *an. quant.* describe an ascent which has the contemplation of God, or Beauty, as its goal. At the same time, however, Augustine urges that, in this life, we may experience some or all of these “acts” at any particular moment—thus bringing into question the picture of spiritual progress as a step by step movement “up” a ladder of virtues.

It is appropriate then that Augustine so strongly describes the order of reality in terms of a hierarchy. The fundamental question about the manner in which the soul possesses its attributes must be seen in this light. Augustine describes creation as a hierarchy of excellence in which the higher transmits both power and specific attributes to the lower. Of course, for Augustine the soul is not the creative origin of the attributes of body, but rather serves as the informing principle after a more Aristotelian fashion. This language nevertheless may reveal a powerful influence of specific texts of Plotinus at this point in Augustine’s life.

A crucial passage is found in *imm. an.*:

Finally, united with the body (and this not in space, although the body occupies space) the soul is affected prior to the body by those highest and eternal principles, changeless and not contained in space, and not only prior, but also to a greater extent. For, the prior affect in the soul occurs to the extent that the soul is nearer to these principles, and, by the same token, the soul is more greatly affected in proportion to the superiority over the body. This nearness is not one in space, but in the order of nature. In this order, then, it is understood that a form is given by the highest Being through the soul to the body—the form whereby the latter exists, in so far as it exists. Hence, the body subsists through the soul and exists by the very fact that it is animated....¹⁰

⁹ *Sol.* 1.7.14.

¹⁰ 15.24. “*Postremo, si quamvis locum occupanti corpori anima tamen non localiter iungitur, summis illis aeternisque rationibus, quae incommutabiliter manent, nec utique loco continentur, prior afficitur anima quam corpus, nec prior tantum, sed etiam magis. Tanto enim prior quanto*

The soul actually communicates form to the body, which form it receives from a higher principle: thus the higher moves the lower not only with respect to efficient causality—which would include, but not be limited to, the cause of movement or energy—but also with respect to formal causality—the communication of essential attributes, and therefore the cause of the particular being of a thing. The language is that of Aristotle, in a Plotinian context. This passage must be read alongside the final chapters of *an. quant.*, where Augustine describes the steps of the soul in terms of an increase of greatness (*vis*). This increase results, not from a rejection of the body, but from a subjection of body to the ontological superiority, and therefore moral authority, of the soul. The desired goal of all creation, he explains in a subsequent chapter, is union with God, and this union is effected by a series of subordinations which are caused by God: body to soul, soul to God.¹¹ The lower is not decimated by the higher, but rather gathered in, assimilated according to its essential principles. To use a language not strictly Augustinian, the *exitus* of creation and the *reditus* of salvation are aspects of the same divine work.

While illumination has a metaphorical dimension, it is intended to describe as literally as possible how the highest principle moves the soul. It is an explanation both ontological and epistemological, since the same light shines upon both the eyes of the soul (*aspectus mentis*) and the things perceived by the soul, at the same time. Just as the physical sun functions by activating the vision

propinquior; et eadem causa tanto etiam magis quanto etiam corpore melior. Nec ista propinquitas loco, sed naturae ordine dicta est. Hoc autem ordine intelligitur a summa essentia speciem corpori per animam tribui, quae est in quantumcumque est. Per animam ergo corpus subsistit, et eo ipso est quo animatur....” Trans. Ludwig Schopp, in Vol. 2 of the *Writings of Saint Augustine* (Fathers of the Church: New York, 1947).

¹¹ *An. quant.* 36.80.

of the eyes and illuminating the objects seen, the light of the mind activates intellectual functions while also illuminating its objects. Although the senses and their objects are clearly distinct, this is not the case with the mind. While Augustine follows a more Platonic tendency to reify intelligible ideas in themselves—especially at the point at which they are identified with the divine mind—in these dialogues he insists on their location (along with the *disciplina*) “in” the soul.¹² Illumination is an idea intended to address this epistemological tension. An early passage in *sol.* merits full citation:

In fact, each one grasps that unique and most true good according to his health and endurance. There is a certain unspeakable and incomprehensible light of minds. Our common light may teach us, as far as is possible, how that light operates. For there are some eyes so healthy and vigorous that they can fearlessly turn toward the sun as soon as they opened. For such as these light itself is health and it is not a teacher that they need but only perhaps some caution. It is enough for them to believe, to hope and to love. Others, however, are dazzled by the very lustre which they so ardently desire to behold and, not seeing it, they gladly return to the darkness. To these, even though they now are such as might rightly be called healthy, it is dangerous to want to show what they are as yet incapable of seeing. They are therefore first to be trained and, for their own good, their love is to be restricted and nourished. First, they should be shown some things which do not shine with their own light but which may be seen only by means of light, such as a garment or a wall or something of that kind. Then they should be shown something which, though it does not shine with its own light, yet glitters more fairly by means of that light, such as, gold, silver and the like, which yet are not so radiant as to hurt the eyes. Then perhaps this earthly fire should be carefully shown them, then the stars, then the moon, then the brightness of the dawn and the splendor of the whitening sky. It is through these things that, each one according to his strength growing more proficient, either through all the steps or leaving out some of them, sooner or later he will behold the sun without flinching and with immense delight. Some such thing is what the best teachers do for those who are most desirous of wisdom but who, though indeed they see, do not see clearly. For it is the duty of good education to arrive at wisdom by means of a definite order; without order this is a matter of chance hardly to be relied upon.¹³

¹² See S. Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism* (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1986), Vol. 1, pp. 403-413; A. Solignac, “Analyse et sources de la Question *De Ideis*”, in *Augustinus Magister 1* (Congrès International Augustinien: Paris, 1954), pp. 307-315.

¹³ *Sol.* 1.13.23. “*Quippe pro sua quisque sanitate ac firmitate comprehendit illud singulare ac verissimum bonum. Lux est quaedam ineffabilis et incomprehensibilis mentium. Lux ista vulgaris nos doceat quantum potest, quomodo se illud habeat. Nam sunt nonnulli oculi tam sani et vegeti,*

Augustine is distinguishing between a light of the mind that is fundamentally “incomprehensible”, and some sort of “common” light: the latter is clearly something created, or at least reflected in the whole of creation and available to human reason. It is intelligible while making all things intelligible. The former kind of light is harder to define, except that it is exemplary to the latter kind.

Wisdom seems to be attainable by one of two paths, and Augustine later qualifies this in *retr.* 4.3, saying that Christ is the only way, and that this passage may not have the “right sound” to “pious ears.” Augustine’s anxiety here is understandable but can also, I think, be overlooked. A certain equivalency can be allowed between these ways since the one that is framed by the theological virtues is clearly superior here, and because of how Augustine appreciates the speculative depth of the faith represented by his mother as early as *beata u.* Throughout his career Augustine continues to parallel the *viae* of the Christian philosopher with that of his faithful mother. What Augustine finds missing from this passage is the assurance that the ways to wisdom described here *both* occur in the context of the theological virtues. Such a reading is consistent with *an. quant.* and *imm. an.*, as well as the prayerful opening chapters of *sol.*

qui se, mox ut aperti fuerint, in ipsum solem sine ulla trepidatione convertant. His quodammodo ipsa lux sanitas est, nec doctore indigent, sed sola fortasse admonitione. His credere, sperare, amare satis est. Alii vero ipso quem videre vehementer desiderant, fulgore feriuntur, et eo non viso saepe in tenebras cum delectatione redeunt. Quibus periculosum est, quamvis jam talibus ut sani recte dici possint, velle ostendere quod adhuc videre non valent. Ergo isti exercendi sunt prius, et eorum amor utiliter differendus atque nutriendus est. Primo enim quaedam illis demonstranda sunt quae non per se lucent, sed per lucem videri possint, ut vestis, aut paries, aut aliquid horum. Deinde quod non per se quidem, sed tamen per illam lucem pulchrius effulgeat, ut aurum, argentum et similia, nec tamen ita radiatum ut oculos laedat. Tunc fortasse terrenus iste ignis modeste demonstrandus est, deinde sidera, deinde luna, deinde aurorae fulgor, et albescentis coeli nitor. In quibus seu citius seu tardius, sive per totum ordinem, sive quibusdam contemptis, pro sua quisque valitudine assuescens, sine trepidatione et cum magna voluptate solem videbit. Tale aliquid sapientiae studiosissimis, nec acute, jam tamen videntibus, magistri optimi faciunt. Nam ordine quodam ad eam pervenire bonae disciplinae officium est, sine ordine autem vix credibilis felicitatis.”

At 1.13.23, Augustine distinguishes between those who need a teacher, and those who do not. Both require faith, although their faith may function in a different capacity with respect to wisdom.¹⁴ The progress towards wisdom that is described in detail reads like a more kataphatic version of *conf.* 10.6.9. When Augustine seeks after God in the physical realm in that text, the whole creation cries back to him: “we are not God!” As in *sol.*, the reflected beauty (*species*) of the creature is what declares the handiwork, and therefore the presence, of the divine. Here, those who are weak in learning must be gradually initiated, so that they may be strengthened and healed in the habits of faith, hope and charity. The basic intellectual goal in this, as confirmed by *an. quant.* 33.76, is the valuation of the spiritual above the material. Augustine’s concern in *retract.* with respect to this is consistent: it is a first principle of Augustinian spirituality, not that the physical be rejected, but that it be seen as a means to a spiritual end, and therefore of lesser value *as compared* to the spiritual.¹⁵ We shall argue later that his desire in *retract.* to distinguish between the senses and the spiritual senses is part of an effort to soften the language of an apparently hostile soul-body dualism.

We cannot agree entirely with Thonnard that the process described above is a mere propaedeutic to the real exercise of Christian philosophy, since the “*tale aliquid*” reminds us that Augustine is describing, in physical terms appropriate to the physical language used to liken illumination to the sun, “something like” what a teacher does.¹⁶ The point of this passage is to affirm that learning must reflect

¹⁴ Compare this description to that of *scientia* as faith in *trin.* 12-14. It is never the case that some require faith and others do not (say, because they are innately spiritually wise); there are rather different degrees and character of faith and erudition—some are teachers, others are not. One could argue that Augustine comes to appreciate a simplicity of faith more in later writings, except that this is generally what Monica represents in early writings.

¹⁵ Cf. 1.1; 1.3; 4.2.

¹⁶ F.J. Thonnard, “La notion de la lumière en philosophie augustinienne”, *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 (1962), p. 127.

the *ordo* that is manifest in creation. Thus in 1.14.25, Augustine says that our *affections* must be re-ordered in such a way as to reflect a properly hierarchical conception of the nature of things. The sensuous ought not to be loved in itself, since it has no *sapientia* to offer as such. Rather, it has ambiguous value as inviting one to *cupiditas*, to the possibility of *inordinate* love. In this, we see the early development of the distinction between “things to be used” and “things to be enjoyed” for their own sake, which will undergird the argument of *de doctrina christiana*, as well as the distinction between *sapientia* and *scientia* in *trin.* 12-14.

While illumination in *sol.* 1 traces a picture of creation as well as the manner in which the human mind images the divine, the idea is left behind by a transition at the end of the first book. It may be that, turning to the question of the soul’s immortality, Augustine is aware of the limitations of the imagistic language of illumination, and instead moves into a more philosophical mode of argumentation. At 15.27, Augustine asks that Reason assist him in seeking to discern the “light.”¹⁷ Reason replies, saying that he must first seek after truth, which in turn introduces the issue of “locating” truth in the soul, which in turn is the basis for the argument for the immortality of the soul.

Reason: Do you say with certainty that you desire to know the soul and God?

Augustine: That is my only desire.

Reason: Nothing else?

Augustine: Absolutely nothing.

Reason: What? Do you not want to know Truth?

Augustine: As if I could know these except through its means!

Reason: Therefore that is first to be known through which the other things can be known.

¹⁷ More specifically, the “nearness” of the light in question: “*Non sinam omnino concludi hunc libellum, nisi mihi modicum quo intentus sim de vicinia lucis aperueris.*”

Reason goes on to demonstrate that, even if true things pass away, the attribute of truth which they possess need not pass away.¹⁸ Later texts on illumination permit us to see “truth” here not simply as an epistemological condition, but as a concept linked more deeply to illumination as a model for creation. “Truth” is prior to particular true things not only conceptually, but also causally, ontologically, as a condition for their being. Although the word “participation” does not occur in this text, illumination and truth serve here to explain how something that transcends the soul can also be present in the same, even inscribed in its nature. Hence truth, once translated from the more limited, propositional sense of *Acad.*, is clearly linked to the concept of light both as an intellectual influence, and as a divine attribute. We have seen how, in *beata u.*, Augustine connects images of light to the interior working of the Holy Spirit. In later writings, light and truth are both identified as spiritual realities¹⁹, and the second person of the Trinity is preeminently identified with *veritas*.²⁰ In *conf.* 7, at the moment of Augustine’s Platonic epiphany, he calls upon the light that transcends the sight of his mind as the immutable light that created him, and he calls this light Truth:

I saw above that same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind... superior because it made me, and I was inferior because I was made by it. The person who knows the truth knows it, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. Eternal truth and true love and beloved eternity: you are my God.
*(Vidi supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem... superior quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior quia factus ab ea. Qui novit veritatem, novit, et qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. Caritas novit eam. O aeterna veritas et vera caritas et cara aeternitas! Tu es Deus meus.)*²¹

¹⁸ 1.15.29.

¹⁹ We will return to this topic; for textual references, see R. Jolivet, *Dieu soleil des esprits* (Paris, 1932), pp. 150-153

²⁰ F.J. Thonnard, “Caractères platoniciens de l’ontologie augustinienne”, in *Augustinus Magister I* (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1954), pp. 322-323.

²¹ *Conf.* 7.10.16.

Both in *ciu.* and *Gn. litt.* the original creation of light is also associated with the birth of the angelic creature. Hence Thonnard, speaking of the distinction between light as uncreated divine attribute and light as spiritual creature, rightly notes that

Saint Augustin n'indique pas toujours nettement cette distinction, mais elle est incontestable et nous la supposons établie. Nous avons en elle une participation créée à la Vérité divine, selon la doctrine de l'exemplarism, théorie fondamentale du platonisme accueillie et christianisée par saint Augustin; et certes, c'est l'exemplaire qui réalise d'abord et au sens propre la perfection, puisqu'il est la source où toutes les autres puisent leur valeur et qu'il est la forme même, absolue et parfaite, sur la modèle de laquelle toutes les participations qui portent le même nom doivent être "façonnées" pour ainsi dire ou *formées* en leur essence. Du point de vue augustinien, il faut conclure que la lumière au sens propre est d'abord "Dieu-Vérité".²²

By this account, the confusion arising from multiple significations of "truth" and "light" is fruitful, since it points to a doctrine of participation which accounts for both formal and other kinds of causality. The arguments for the immortality of the soul in *sol.* 2 and *imm. an.* must be read in this context, namely, of an emerging theory of participation; otherwise, they seem weak indeed. Critics of Augustine's arguments about the immortality of the soul tend to overlook their context.²³ The likeness of the soul to God, and therefore its nearness, is a premise of the argument, and not a conclusion.²⁴ To say, therefore, that the truth or the *disciplinae* depend on the mind as attributes depend on their subject, is not the whole picture. Truth is associated with the soul in an inseparable manner, but not as though caused by the soul, but as caused by some higher principle with which the soul has a natural kinship. Illumination is the image intended to explain the

²² F.J. Thonnard (1962), pp. 130-131.

²³ Richard Penaskovic, "An Analysis of Saint Augustine's '*De immortalitate animae*'", in *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), p. 171. John Maurant approaches his position.

²⁴ Cf. *an. quant.* 34.77: "Just as we must acknowledge that the human soul is not what God is, so it must be set down that nothing is nearer to God among all the things He has created than the human soul."

causal relation between truth and the soul, and therefore the likeness of the human to the divine. Because this likeness is natural and universal, Augustine will conclude that truth can never be separated from the soul—unless the soul deliberately turns away from the truth by an act of the will.²⁵ This is the “contradiction” of sin, the spiritual dilemma of the “free” creature.

Having provided the context of illumination, we will now turn to particular texts that draw out and develop the importance of memory that was first intimated in *ord.* 2.

Memory and the nature of the soul: texts

Sol. 1.4.9

Augustine distinguishes memory from knowledge early in *sol.* At 1.6.13, he describes reason as the vision of the soul: “*aspectus animae ratio est.*” Augustine immediately qualifies this, saying that not all who behold something truly see it (*videre*). The natural vision of the soul is corrected and enabled by faith, hope and charity.²⁶ Without these virtues, the mind sees, but it does not understand; it listens, but it does not hear.

If those things which Plato and Plotinus said about God are true, is it enough for you to know God as they knew Him?
Augustine If those things which they said are true, it does not of necessity follow that they knew them. For many people speak at length about things they do not know, just as I myself said I desired to know all those things for which I prayed. I would not desire them if I already knew them. Was I not able nonetheless to speak of them? Indeed, I spoke not of those things which I grasped with my intellect, but of the things which I had gathered from many sources and committed to memory, the things which I believed as much as I could. But to know—that is something else.²⁷

²⁵ *Imm. an.* 6.10-11; *an. quant.* 36.80.

²⁶ Cf. *supra*.

²⁷ “*Si ea quae de Deo dixerunt Plato et Plotinus vera sunt, satisne tibi est ita Deum scire, ut illi sciebant? A. Non continuo, si ea quae dixerunt, vera sunt, etiam scisse illos ea necesse est. Nam multi copiose dicunt quae nesciunt, ut ego ipse omnia quae oravi, me dixi scire cupere, quod non*

Augustine is not saying that Plato was operating merely at the level of *pistis*. The distinction here between two kinds of knowing is significant. Memory is described in this chapter as propaedeutic to knowledge. Positively speaking, it is intended to encompass a variety of sources of data: faith, experience, authority, and so on. To the extent that the truthfulness of the objects of memory is accidental, it would seem that we have a species of Platonic opinion. Augustine contrasts the “knowing” of memory, as associated with the life of the senses, with the certitude and relative immediacy of mathematical knowledge. To know a line or a sphere, he says, is properly said of the intellect. Once pressed to give some account of how knowledge is acquired, he cannot maintain a simplistic opposition of intellect and sense. He grudgingly concludes that the senses are useful, even necessary, for the kinds of knowledge that are encompassed by memory. He describes the knowledge of mathematical forms as a process of abstraction from the sensible.

Reason What about these—have you perceived [a sphere or a line] by the senses or the intellect?

Augustine I rather employed the senses in this matter as I use a ship. For, when they had carried me to the place to which I was going and I had there dismissed them, and when I had been set down, as it were, on dry land and began to turn these things over in my thought, my steps were for a long time unsteady.²⁸

Although the senses by habituation make the intellect less sure, they are necessary for learning. Memory is therefore suited to contain everything that is learned by means of the senses, whether by language, visual images or other modes of

cuperem si jam scirem: num igitur eo minus illa dicere potui? Dixi enim non quae intellectu comprehendendi, sed quae undecumque collecta memoriae mandavi, et quibus accommodavi quantam potui fidem: scire autem aliud est.” Sol. 1.4.9.

²⁸ “*R. Quid haec, sensibusne percipisti, an intellectu? A. Im sensus in hoc negotio quasi navim sum expertus. Nam cum ipsi me ad locum quo tendebam pervexerint, ubi eos dimisi, et jam velut in solo positus coepi cogitatione ista volvere, diu mihi vestigia titubarunt.” Sol. 1.4.9.*

signification. And while Augustine must admit that the intellect may in some sense depend on, or “use”, the senses, he says clearly at 1.5.11 that mathematical knowledge and knowledge of God are of an entirely different order. Yet he is not prepared to abandon this much-valued trope of comparison.

Sol. 2.20.34-35

The question of the ability of the will to separate the soul from God, is, as we have observed, deferred for *lib. arb.* as well as *conf.* We have also observed how the language of illumination in *sol.* 1 serves as a basis for an argument about the relationship between truth and the soul. In the second book of *sol.*, Augustine asks how the soul can participate in error; here, as in *Acad.* 3, Augustine assumes that physical data only gives rise to opinion, and therefore admit of falsehood. I take this to be a development that moves away from the position described above in Book I. It is, moreover, a move that compromises the importance of verifiable sense-perception for the arguments against skepticism in *Acad.*

Augustine’s discussion of falsehood seems flawed to the extent that it depends on the idea of a deliberate act of deceit. Much like Plotinus, he does not want to make sense-perception something merely physical and therefore passive, but unlike Plotinus, he does not invoke an Aristotelian sense of judgment in order to explain both the limitations and compensatory techniques of the imagination in the act of sense-perception. Thus Augustine says that “zinc” is to be blamed as a deceiver because it looks like silver; it is not in fact our fault if we are mistaken about its nature.²⁹

²⁹ *Sol.* 2.15.27. I take dreams to be a special category of truly false phenomena, cf. 2.6.11-9.17.

Is there anything that we truthfully know in the realm of the sensible? Augustine asks whether we find veritable geometric forms in bodies.³⁰ In a move that qualifies, if not contradicts, *ord.* he replies in the negative: bodies tend to imitate geometric forms, and as imitating the true, they are different, and therefore false.³¹ It is appropriate then that at the conclusion of *sol.* 2, Augustine distinguishes between the *figura* of the intellect and the *figura* (in the sense of phantasm) that is abstracted from the sensible, “made by the intellect.” In both cases, the intellect is at work, but in one it depends primarily on the experience of the senses.³² Augustine explains the difference by distinguishing two kinds of remembering (*recordatio*).

In one case, when something has been forgotten, it can be brought again to remembrance with the assistance of others who suggest dissimilar things. A man will realize that these examples are not what he is seeking, and yet still he does not remember the thing itself. It is not quite true, then, to say that he forgets, but he “cannot be deceived or misled, and he knows sufficiently what he is seeking.” This is an “intermediate” type of forgetfulness. In the other case, Augustine describes a kind of forgetfulness that is “closer and more like to remembrance and recollection of the truth.”

Such a type of forgetfulness occurs when we see something, recognize for certain that we have seen it at some time, and declare that we know it. But where or when or how or in whose company it came to our attention we struggle to review and remember. As, for example, if this were to happen to us in the case of a man, we ask him where it was we made his acquaintance. When he has reminded us of it, all at once the whole affair

³⁰ *Sol.* 2.18.32.

³¹ “*Quis enim mente tam caecus est qui non videat, istas quae in geometrica docentur, habitare in ipsa veritate, aut in his etiam veritatem; illas vero corporis figuras, siquidem quasi ad istas tendere videntur, habere nescio quam imitationem veritatis, et ideo falsas esse?*”

³² Gerard O’Daly argues that, under the influence of Cicero, Augustine normally understands *phāntasia* in a purely passive sense, with this passage as the exception; cf. *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1987), p. 107.

floods back to our memory like a light and we no longer have difficulty in remembering.... Those who are well trained in the liberal arts are like this. They bring to light in the process of learning knowledge that undoubtedly is buried in oblivion within them, and, in a way, they disinter it. Moreover, they are not content and they cannot contain themselves until they behold in all its breadth and fullness the whole countenance of Truth whose splendor already glows in a certain measure in those arts.³³

Of course, Augustine then warns that the liberal arts, compared with the unchanging truth, are variable. The splendor of truth is available in a qualified manner (“*quidam*”) through the arts. The mind, he says, must seek a position of transcendence by turning in upon itself, and looking to that place from whence it judges between true and false, circle and square. The *imaginationes* that are the product of sense-perception are to be avoided, and even though we may abstract geometric figures from sensible things, these are not to be compared with geometrical principles that cannot be imaged at all (such as the infinite division of a finite space). Augustine is a good student of Plato in observing this distinction.

This passage concludes *sol.* How has it explained what it intends to explain? Augustine observes that recollection is something like a habit, or a state of intellectual fitness. Certain things may seem to have been forgotten, but the fact that they can be sought after in a systematic way, even by a process of elimination, proves that they have not in fact been forgotten. The possibility of recollection proves that knowledge exists in some sense even where there is no full and exhaustive apprehension. If memory is at work, then the will is functioning as uniting subject and the thing sought after. The idea of memory as

³³ “*Cui simile est quando videmus aliquid, certoque recognoscimus id nos vidisse aliquando, atque nosse affirmamus; sed ubi, aut quando, aut quomodo, aut apud quem nobis in notitiam venerit, satagimus repetere atque recolere. Ut si de homine nobis contigerit, etiam quaerimus ubi eum noverimus: quod cum ille commemoraverit, repente tota res memoriae quasi lumen infunditur, nihilque amplius, ut reminiscamur, laboratur.... Tales sunt qui bene disciplinis liberalibus eruditi; siquidem illas sine dubio in se oblivione obrutas eruunt discendo, et quodammodo refodiunt: nec tamen contenti sunt, nec se tenent donec totam faciem veritatis, cuius quidam in illis artibus splendor iam subtrulit, latissime atque plenissime intueantur.*” *Sol.* 2.20.34-35.

an inexplicit link to a ground of knowledge that is also an object of knowledge, illustrates Augustine's emerging sense that knowledge must include other aspects of the activity of the intellectual soul, and cannot be reduced to mere propositional certainty.³⁴

Rather than demonstrating the falsehood of images based on sense-perception, the conclusion of *sol.* points to their usefulness in recollection, whether we conceive of recollection as a horizontal process (i.e. the recollection of a face or other sensible thing) or a vertical process (i.e. the careful, hierarchical progress through the sensible to the ideal). Augustine says that minds trained in the liberal arts may have true things more readily at hand to their memory, since they are better trained in the mnemonic techniques that are a part of rhetorical instruction. Nevertheless one must remain suspicious and eager to transcend sensible images even when they are required. Even though Augustine does not speak any longer through the language of illumination, the transcendence should be understood after a similar model: sensible things, once known to be sensed by virtue of the illumination of some agent, are thereafter thought to be of secondary importance compared to an inquiry into the nature of that agency.

The problem of forgetting and the constancy of soul: imm. an. 3.3

The question that moves *de immortalitate animae* is the sense in which the soul is said to change and to remain changeless. If we possess reason, Augustine argues, and if reason does not exist without learning (*disciplina*), then it follows

³⁴ Brian Stock speaks of this as an abiding "skepticism" (in *Augustine the Reader* (Belknap Press: Cambridge, 1996)) that runs throughout Augustine's thinking. This is a provocative way to describe what we prefer think of as an attempt to adopt classical wisdom Christianly, in which a Christ-like humility becomes a necessary epistemic condition for the apprehension of truth; cf. Conclusion.

“that learning is in the mind of man.”³⁵ *Disciplina*, in some texts identified with truth, is described as unchanging.³⁶ Nevertheless, it would seem that the mind is variable since it can forget. Reading this text after *sol.*, the issue seems straightforward. Augustine takes the occasion of the objection to explore the several ways in which the mind or the soul can be said to change; this discussion carries on through *an. quant.*

What emerges is a picture of the soul as something in an intermediate position between the variable and the absolutely unchanging, participating in the one, participated by the other. Augustine rightly points out that what moves is not necessarily moved in a passive sense: “constancy possesses some power (*virtus*).”³⁷ The soul, while remaining “constant”, moves the body in time and, in a certain sense, space. While Augustine will not allow that the soul moves, strictly speaking, with respect to space, it does move with respect to time. As a result, the mind can contain what is plural in a simultaneous, unified fashion. The mind can be extended in time, while remaining whole and the same in itself.³⁸ In a limited manner it is at once changeless (as active principle) and changing (as receptive principle). The acts of the soul do not thereby demonstrate change in the sense of dissolution or death, but rather as activity or power.

³⁵ *Imm. an.* 1.1.

³⁶ On Augustine’s struggle with the identification of truth and *disciplina*, see Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000), pp. 100-104. It may be true that Augustine’s pre-occupation with the language of spiritual “location” reveals an excessive influence of Stoic materialism; we only disagree with Cary in his insistence that Augustine is unable in the early works to distinguish easily between the mind and God. Appreciating the hierarchical picture of creation that emerges from *ord.* and *sol.* is a corrective to this interpretation.

³⁷ *Imm. an.* 3.3.

³⁸ This idea recurs in Augustine, and has one origin in Aristotle’s *de anima* when he speaks of the unity of the judging faculty; cf. 431b18.

Imm. an. thus reaffirms a hierarchical picture of creation and causality in general. The power of the soul, as well as its substance, is received from a higher principle; in turn, the soul moves and informs what is lower than it, the sensible in general and the body in particular.³⁹ The presence of learning in the mind must be understood in a similar manner. To say that the *disciplinae* abide in the mind does not mean that they have their origin there. The mind possesses a knowledge of the *disciplinae* as a function of participation in the illuminating light of knowledge, itself an emanation of foundational truth. Even the more ordinary exercises of rhetoric and dialectic themselves are works of reason and therefore of truth, even though one must distinguish between the practice and the principles which they presuppose.⁴⁰

The mind therefore changes with respect to time, by means of memory, unifying the multiple data of experience. To the objection that the mind forgets things, Augustine replies that the mind actually possesses a great many things of which it is not aware. The mind is only aware of what has *actually* entered its thinking.⁴¹ He strengthens this argument in 14.23, where he points out that the mind, upon waking, is not a blank; even while we sleep, “true reasons” abide in the mind. For the soul to change, then, with respect to its qualities, is not to introduce an essential change.⁴² An increase in wisdom indicates an actualization

³⁹ Cf. 15.24-16.25. The picture is almost Procline in its hierarchical clarity. Unlike Plotinus, here the soul inhabits its proper place entirely; unlike Proclus, Augustine does not lend real formal causality to the influence of soul over what is lesser. On the mediate communication of substance, see *Elements of Theology*, Props. 174, 195.

⁴⁰ See for example an important article by J. Roland E. Ramirez (“Augustine’s Numbering Numbers”, *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), pp. 153-161) which explains the distinction, with respect to *conf.* 10.12, between numbering and numbered numbers. He describes it as an “inarticulated relation”, in which numbering numbers are clearly transcendent and causal; the logic of illumination compels us to see numbered numbers as temporal instances of something eternal “existing in something compatible with such an eternal existence.”

⁴¹ *An. quant.* 4.6.

⁴² *Imm. an.* 6.11.

of an attribute proper to the soul: one might become more God-like, or in the absence of wisdom, more like an animal, but the soul does not thereby cease to be what it is.⁴³

An. quant. 5.8

This observation answers the basic query of *an. quant.* To the suggestion that the soul must increase along with bodily magnitude, Augustine replies by showing that the soul increases only metaphorically, as a function of growth in virtue, wisdom or excellence.⁴⁴ The manner in which *imm. an.* concludes, by returning to the issue of the “location” of the soul which introduced the first book of *sol.*, points to the substance of the argument of *an. quant.* This work poses six questions about the nature of the soul. In the first two chapters, Augustine answers the first two questions: the soul’s origin is God, and its nature is simple and immortal. The remainder of the text speaks to the third question concerning the “greatness” of the soul.⁴⁵ In the third chapter, Augustine summarily explains that the soul is “great” not with respect to extent, but with respect to power (*vis*).⁴⁶ *An. quant.* is a development of this idea, already put forth in *imm. an.*, and therefore a meditation on the immateriality of the soul and its proper place within the hierarchy of creation.

In the fifth chapter (5.8), Augustine again appeals to memory in order to explain how the soul, in a mediatory position, can be simple and yet gather into

⁴³ Nevertheless, in *an. quant.* 20.34, Augustine reiterates that learning implies no real acquisition, since it is simply the recollection of what the soul possess eternally; again, Augustine says that this is not the place to develop this particular topic. *Retr.* (1.8) clarifies that recollection must be understood as a dialectical exercise, and not as implying the soul’s pre-existence.

⁴⁴ *An. quant.* 16.28-18.32.

⁴⁵ The final three questions are only alluded to in the final chapter (36.80): the reason for the union of soul and body, the effect of this union and the effect of the separation of soul and body.

⁴⁶ *An. quant.* 3.4; “*anquantum valeat nosse velis.*”

itself the multiplicity of sense-perception and experience. Body limits the soul only with respect to present perception⁴⁷; at the same time, this limitation is overcome by memory, by the activity of its offspring, recollection and expectation. Augustine finds that no present perception is possible without the operation of memory; as O'Daly writes, "all mental concentration persists of necessity over a time-span: to hear even the briefest sound memory is needed, for the beginning of a sound does not coincide temporally with its end, and cannot be perceived simultaneously in its entirety."⁴⁸ Hence again, the idea that the soul can extend in time, but not in space, is the answer to Augustine's concern about unity.⁴⁹

In this text, memory shows how the soul can be associated with body, and yet remain free from the body to a limited extent. Echoing language later used in *conf.* 10, Augustine observes that the soul is great because, in an immaterial fashion, it can contain "great, vast cities."⁵⁰ Again, at 14.23 Augustine says that the soul, while lacking quantity, can contain what is great by virtue of the *vis* of memory.⁵¹ Augustine is speaking of the combined work of imagination and memory: From experience in time, memory gathers and retains a variety of

⁴⁷ "*Cum igitur anima tua hic sit ubi corpus, nec ultra spatium eius porrigatur, ut superior ratio demonstrabat....*"

⁴⁸ "The response to skepticism and the mechanics of cognition", in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. E. Stump and N. Kretzmann (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001), p. 166. O'Daly finds this position, at least with regard to visual perception, unconvincing.

⁴⁹ Note how Plato, in *Phaedrus*, avoids the language of temporal extension, preferring to identify the object of memory as what is simple and universal; cf. *supra*.

⁵⁰ Cf. 5.9. "*Cur ergo, cum tam parvo spatio sit anima quam corpus est eius, tam magnae in ea possunt exprimi imagines, ut et urbes, et latitudo terrarum, et quaeque alia ingentia apud se possit imaginari? Volo enim cogites paulo diligentius, quanta et quam multa memoria nostra contineat, quae utique anima continentur. Qui ergo fundus est, qui sinus, quae immensitas quae possit haec capere, cum et eam tantam quantum corpus est superior ratio docuisse videatur?*"

⁵¹ "*Si autem te movet, cur tanta coeli, terrae, marisque spatia memoria contineat, cum sit ipse nullius quantitatis; mira quaedam vis est, quam tamen ex iis quae a nobis comperta sunt, quantum inest ingenio tuo luminis, animadvertere potes.*"

images which in turn form complex wholes.⁵² Though the creative process depends upon images, spatial limitations are nearly irrelevant.

Reason is described as the sight of the soul⁵³, proceeding from a fixed point; memory explodes the singularity, and makes what one could describe as a straight line of mental vision fan out, as it were, tracing a full circle, a total perspective of potential perception. Memory gives the mind's eye perfect peripheral vision: present perception, with a remembered sum of experiences, and a sense of expectation formed by the same remembrances. While encompassing in potency so much, the mind nevertheless remains the fixed point of judgment. It is tempting to describe this position as one of transcendence, except that the ability of mind to be entirely immanent to what is sensibly before it, while remaining in itself, is more to the point.

Memory and sense-perception in the ascent of the soul to God: an. quant. 23.41

Augustine defines sense-perception as a bodily experience of which the soul is aware directly.⁵⁴ This is contrasted with the indirect experience of the soul—for example, growth, which is a bodily experience, but not an act of sense-perception. Augustine wishes to observe that man is not divided in the act of perception: it is not the eyes that see; they are merely instruments. It is the man that sees, or more specifically, the act of seeing. His account is wholly

⁵² On memory and imagination, see the correspondence between Augustine and Nebridius, especially Letters 6 and 7; see also T. Breyfogle, "Memory and Imagination in Augustine's *Confessions*", in *Literary Imagination, Ancient and Modern: Essays in Honor of David Grene* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1999), pp. 139-154.

⁵³ 14.24.

⁵⁴ 25.48. "*Fortasse enim verum est, omnis sensus passio corporis est animam non latens.*"

Aristotelian on this point.⁵⁵ The soul is receptive to the information taken from sensible signs; in judgment, the soul has an active knowledge of the world “through the body.”⁵⁶

Sense-perception, especially vision, is a process analogical to knowledge. Just as sight moves over things until it finds that which it desires to behold, so also does reason move over its proper objects, and when it sees that upon which it is focused, there is actual knowledge: it is reason that beholds, and *scientia* that sees; reason that seeks, *scientia* that is found.⁵⁷ The comparison between sight and knowledge marks a suggestive transition in the text, at 33.66, to a description of the seven steps or acts of the soul. These are described in a variety of different ways, as the following table summarizes.⁵⁸

1. animation	of the body	beautiful of another
2. sensation	through the body	beautiful through another
3. art	about the body	beautiful about another
4. virtue	toward itself	beautiful toward a beautiful
5. tranquility	in itself	beautiful in a beautiful
6. approach	toward God	beautiful toward Beauty
7. contemplation	in God	beautiful in Beauty

⁵⁵ On Aristotelian parallels, see O'Daly (*ibid.* p. 166) who writes that “sense perception is perception of images of objects, not of objects themselves. These images are not corporeal: Augustine describes them as a kind of ‘spiritual matter’ (*an. et or.* 4.17.25), but the analogy is confusing, for, like Aristotle, Augustine argues that perception is the ability to receive forms without matter. Moreover perception is the perception of like by like. There is an affinity between the percipient’s reason and the image or form of the object perceived, which is described by Augustine in rational, numerical terms or in the language of proportion and measure. It is this affinity which makes perception possible in the first place, as well as guaranteeing its reliability.”

⁵⁶ 23.42.

⁵⁷ Augustine uses the term “*ratiocinatio*” to describe the discursive activity of reason. 27.53. “*Ut ratio sit quidam mentis aspectus, ratiocinatio autem rationis inquisitio, id est, aspectus illius, per ea quae aspicienda sunt, motio. Quare ista opus est ad quaerendum, illa ad videndum. Itaque cum ille mentis aspectus, quem rationem vocamus, coniectus in rem aliquam, videt illam, scientia nominatur: cum autem non videt mens, quamvis intendat aspectum; inscitia vel ignorantia dicitur.*”

⁵⁸ This summary is found in 35.79, although it is incomplete without the development of 33.70-76; As we pointed out initially, Augustine maintains that the soul has the power to perform all of these acts simultaneously, though it might pay attention only to several at one time. This makes it difficult to read these steps as only describing a terminal ascent.

In the first two steps, Augustine speaks of the soul as “in” the mortal body mainly in order to bring unity thereto. By animating, it gives and maintains *ordo*. In sensation, the soul functions deliberately in the physical world, even though it may withdraw for a time so that both the soul and the senses may have their “vigour restored.”⁵⁹ The soul, however, is not naturally at home in the physical environment, and it is by habit that it comes to feel itself a part of the same. This passive sense of habituation Augustine describes as memory. The third step distinguishes a different sense of memory, not as “a link with the familiar”, but as an active compiler of things such as the *disciplinae*, practical skills, and language: this is memory as “the power of reason and thought.”⁶⁰ Augustine gives us a very clear distinction between two lower functions of memory which we will see developed in *de musica*. *Religio* enters the picture at this point, as something forming and leading the memory as a pedagogue. From the fourth step on, Augustine appeals to the necessity of a sure faith as a process of ascent which is clearly described in terms of the progressive valuation of the spiritual over the material. In this process, the soul is made free and, speaking in almost Stoic terms, undisturbed. Only then can it commence its approach to God.

These steps merit more careful analysis, for this is rightly one of the most famous passages from Augustine’s early works. We will only make several observations. Augustine says clearly that the purpose of laying out these steps as a conclusion to these texts (*sol.*, *imm. an.* and *an. quant.*) has been to show the reader how much greater are unseen realities than things that are seen, and

⁵⁹ 33.71

⁶⁰ 33.72: “...vim ratiocinandi et excogitandi.”

therefore how “well we are nourished by the Church.”⁶¹ This confirms our initial thesis about the fundamental concern motivating this group of texts, as intimated in the quotation from *conf.* 6.⁶² Augustine also expresses his desire that the reader will have an increased hope in the resurrection of mutable bodies⁶³, and therefore comfort in the Incarnation. Augustine is clearly linking the Incarnation to the correction of false conceptions about the soul. This corrective is entirely practical, since bodily resurrection comes to pass through participation in the Incarnation.

Throughout these texts, Augustine has appealed to an ordered, hierarchical picture of both creation and the constitution of man. Illumination, in the first book of *sol.*, confirms this picture, and adds a nascent explanation for how the mind is related to the highest light and creative principle. Augustine has also argued that the soul and the body stand in a veritable union, by virtue of the subjection of the latter to the former: the soul actively animates, orders and informs, and the soul also uses the body as an instrument for the “passive activity” of perception. Thus it is through an anthropological model that Augustine understands how the physical must be united with the spiritual. Since God “never abandons the soul”, the physical itself is firmly held under divine providence by virtue of its subordination to a particular soul.⁶⁴ We say “particular” because there is no suggestion of a cosmic world-soul in these texts. We simply have an early instance of Augustine’s admitted anthropocentrism, justified through the

⁶¹ 33.76. “*Tunc agnosceamus quam vera nobis credenda imperata sint, quamque optime ac saluberrime apud matrem Ecclesiam nutriti fuerimus.*”

⁶² Cf. note 3, *supra*.

⁶³ John A. Mourant notes this in his “Remarks on the *De Immortalitate Animae*”, *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), p. 216.

⁶⁴ 36.80. It is interesting, in this regard, that at the conclusion of this text, it is not philosophical materialism, but rather idolatry of which the reader is warned. As Augustine will make clear in *conf.*, the philosophical error is the offspring of the sin of pride.

centrality of the Incarnation. It is tempting to find in these texts a parallel of anthropological microcosm and cosmic macrocosm, since even the rebellious act of the free will cannot disturb this fundamental, hierarchic orderliness.

Memory as the ability of the soul to extend in time makes it possible for the soul to assimilate the multiplicity of what is subordinate to it. Augustine, in *retract.*, expresses reservation about linking the language of recollection to the liberal arts, preferring a language of dialectic and instruction. But the discussion of illumination as a link between the mind and God, and the insertion of soul in a mediatory place in a hierarchically ordered cosmos, has opened the possibility for the development of a theological and contemplative function for memory in later texts.

CHAPTER 6:

DE MAGISTRO AND DE MUSICA

These texts are both examples of the kind of *exercitatio animi* thought by Augustine to be necessary for the purification of the soul, namely the purgation of excessively sense-based opinions. *De magistro* effects this with respect to language, and *de musica* with respect to numbers. As such, they are appropriately paralleled. Although their traditional dates of composition also justify keeping them together, there are important advances made from one to the other. *Mus.* exposes most clearly of any text yet why Augustine makes memory the foundation of his anthropology. It also offers glimpses of the direction in which this thesis will continue after this chapter, namely, toward the incarnational rationale for an anthropology founded on memory.

Mag. is of more interest to us for what it is not than for what it is. It opens up the conceptual space for memory to become the foundation of knowledge as a dialectical mode of presence. It does not however give us a “theory of memory.” *Mus.* begins this, but ultimately points the reader to *conf.* It nevertheless declares for the first time that memory has a central role in the mind’s knowledge of God: but this new role is barely developed. These are texts with very specific goals, and we shall lay out their arguments—with far more attention to that of *mus.*

De magistro

By his own account, Augustine maintains that *mag.* presents neither a theory of signification nor a theory of language. At the conclusion, he claims that he will discuss elsewhere the “usefulness of words”; this text is rather about what

words are not, or cannot do.¹ I take the “other place” to be *doct. chr.*, where we see his concern about language become a matter of the interpretation of Scripture.² Goulven Madec’s warning remains apt for all readers of *mag*.³

Il faut toutefois se garder de trop prêter à Augustin, sous peine d’être déçu. Il n’a pas développé, pour elle-même, une théorie des signes ou du langage.... Il y a bien des éléments de sémantique, concernant le “métalangage” (rapports du mot et du signe, énoncé, etc.) et la “pragmatique” (buts du langage...). Mais il faut observer que ni les uns ni les autres ne concernent directement la pratique normale du langage, réserve faite de la question initiale.... On ne devrait donc pas supposer que la critique du langage, menée dans le *De magistro*, soit toute la doctrine d’Augustin sur le langage. S’il fait violence au langage (cf. 8.24), c’est pour faire comprendre que ses conditions de possibilité ne sont pas d’ordre linguistique ou métalinguistique, mais d’ordre métaphysique : le procès linguistique authentique implique l’activité des esprits.

Nevertheless, philosophical commentators such as Christopher Kirwan, inspired by Wittgenstein’s brief reference to Augustine in his *Philosophical Investigations*, speak with great relish of how Augustine’s “theory of language” simply doesn’t work.⁴ Other interpreters see the limited function that Augustine does allow language to have, but are not sensitive to what Madec describes as the

¹ 14.46. “*Sed de tota utilitate verborum, quae si bene consideretur non parva est, alias, si Deus siverit, requiremus.*” The Latin text is available in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, Vol. 29, ed. K. Daur (1970); we are using the English translation of Peter King (Hackett: Indianapolis, 1995), with reference to the translations by G. Madec (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris, 1976) and Adele Canilli (Mursia: Milano, 1993).

² On the relationship between these two texts, and for further bibliography, see the article by Mark Jordan, “Words and Word: Incarnation and signification in Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*” in *Augustinian Studies* (Vol. 11, 1980), pp. 175-196. We will consider the connection between memory and biblical interpretation in the chapters on *conf*.

³ *Notes Complémentaires* 4, in the first series, Vol. 6, of the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne*.

⁴ “Wittgenstein wrote: ‘When we say: ‘Every word in a language signifies something’ we have so far said *nothing whatever*; unless we have explained exactly *what* distinction [i.e. contrast with non-significance] we wish to make.’ I wish to conclude that Augustine, who does say this, has not said nothing whatever, but on the contrary has explained what he means, if not exactly, at least painstakingly and sufficiently for us in our time, who are standing on his and so many others’ tall shoulders, to be able to see that he is wrong, though not for the reason presented by Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigations*.” Christopher Kirwan, “Augustine’s Philosophy of Language” in the *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001), pp. 186-204. See also Kirwan, *Augustine* (Routledge: London and New York, 1989), pp. 50-55; M.F. Burnyeat, “Wittgenstein and Augustine’s *De Magistro*”, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. Vol. 61 (1987), pp. 1-24; P. Bearsly, “Augustine and Wittgenstein on language”, *Philosophy* 58 (1983), pp. 229-236.

“metaphysical conditions” that must obtain in order for language to function. We are left with Augustine as the “empiricist linguist”, even a Humean!⁵ Jackson and others have shown that the idea of words as species of signs, and the distinction between a thing and a *verbum*, *signum*, *vocabulum* or *nomen* is not in fact original, but has ancient sources, both philosophical and rhetorical.⁶ Nevertheless the fact that Augustine, like Boethius in his commentary on Aristotle’s *de interpretatione*, finds that the relationship between signs and things is largely conventional⁷, leads semioticians such as Eco and Deely to find in Augustine a signification theory that is novel, “expressivist” and entirely modern.

This variety of scholarly interests has little bearing on our project. This text, very much like *mus.*, is a perfect example of Augustine’s early sense of the pedagogical importance of *exercitatio animi*. In *de anima et eius origine* Augustine admits that he has little idea of how and whence the soul comes to act on the body. The only thing of which he is certain is that the soul is greater than the body⁸, and parallel to this, that the intelligible is of greater value than the sensible. The minimal purpose of the *exercitatio* in this context is to remind oneself of this. Thus at 8.21, Augustine asks why he and Adeodatus are talking about signs and not things if they are seeking the happy life. Augustine replies, saying that we must

exercise the mind’s strength and sharpness, with which we’re able not only to withstand but also to love the heat and light of that region where the happy life is (*sed exercendi vires et mentis aciem, quibus regionis illius,*

⁵ As one example, see Herman J. Cloeren, “St. Augustine’s *De Magistro*: a transcendental investigation”, in *Augustinian Studies* 16 (1984), pp. 21-27.

⁶ B.D. Jackson, *Semantics and Hermeneutics in Saint Augustine’s De Doctrina Christiana*, Dissertation (Yale University, 1967), p. 65 ff. This dissertation includes a useful translation of *de dialectica*. See also the excellent article by R.A. Markus, “St. Augustine on signs”, in *Phronesis* 2 (1957), pp. 60-83.

⁷ Cf. *doctr. chr.* 2.25.38.

⁸ 4.5.6.

ubi beata vita est, calorem ac lucem non modo sustinere, verum et amare possimus).

We must understand the signs, the physical shadows, of things before we are fit to behold the truths which they signify. Only when the *exercitatio* is complete do we see it for what it is: a *preparatio*, abandoned by one who truly understands, and never really necessary for the faithful.⁹

Ultimately, *mag.* proposes the same problem as Plato's *Meno*: how can one attempt to learn something unless one already has some sort of anterior knowledge, such that what is learned can be affirmed to be true? Plato's answer to this problem, as we have seen, is the so-called theory of recollection.

Augustine largely embraces this theory, but without the unorthodox element of pre-existence—an element which, we have suggested, was regarded as inessential by Plato himself. These two texts therefore open up the conceptual space for a notion of memory that is not necessarily linked to sense-perception. This in turn raises questions about the status and nature of lower kinds of knowledge, and the unity of man as soul and body.

The first and longest part of the text is concerned with signs, chiefly spoken words, that signify other signs, and signs that signify things. Scholars have discussed the particular divisions that might be imposed on the argument of

⁹ Cf. *mus.* 6.17.59. "But if any read this talk of ours committed to writing, they must know these things have been written by persons much weaker than those who, having followed the authority of the two Testaments, by believing, hoping, and loving, venerate and worship the consubstantial and unchangeable Trinity of the one highest God from whom, through whom and in whom are all things. For they are purified, not by flashing human reasoning, but by the effective and burning fire of charity." Trans. R.C. Taliaferro (Fathers of the Church: New York, 1947). ("*Sermonem autem hunc nostrum mandatum litteris si qui legent, sciant multo infirmioribus haec esse scripta, quam sunt illi, qui unius summi Dei consubstantialem et incommutabilem trinitatem, ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia, duorum testamentorum auctoritatem secuti venerantur et colunt eam credendo, sperando, diligendo. Hi enim non scintillantibus humanis ratiocinationibus sed validissimo et flagrantissimo caritatis igne purgantur.*")

mag.¹⁰ At 4.7, Augustine lays out the order of discussion about the nature of signs.

- i. 4.7-8.21 signs that can be explained or “exhibited” by other signs
- ii. 8.22-end
 - a. signs that are “self-exhibiting” (10.29-10.32)
 - b. signs that “point” to things (10.33-13.40)¹¹

The first part (i.) argues that words are a species of signs; words can signify other words, such as “pronoun.” Even words that properly signify things have a function as signifying some other word. This means that every word by its significative function can act as mnemonic tag.¹² The possibility of circularity of signification is not regarded as problematic by Augustine. The argument is certainly incomplete at the level of language, of words, in relation to themselves. Much as the physical is morally ambiguous, either ensnaring the beholder, or else directing the gaze of the soul beyond itself; so also is the reader expected to see the argument about signs—where every *verbum* is a name—as incomplete.¹³ Indeed, sensible of the difficulties of his project, Augustine remarks at 5.14 that to discuss words with words is “as entangled as interlocking one’s fingers and rubbing them together, where hardly anyone but the person doing it can distinguish the fingers that itch from the fingers scratching the itch.”¹⁴ It is appropriate then that this first section ends with a summary and interlude (7.19-

¹⁰ See G. Madec, “Analyse du *De magistro*”, in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 21 (1975), pp. 63-71; F. Crosson, “The structure of the *De magistro*”, in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 35 (1989), pp. 120-127; F.-J. Thonnard, *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* Vol. 6 (2nd ed., 1952), p. 15, p. 103. The Hackett edition adopts Crosson’s divisions.

¹¹ Whether ii.b. technically ends at 13.40, or continues to the end of the dialogue is the point of disagreement between Crosson and Madec. Crosson’s basic point, that it is an inadequate summary to simply say that “Christ is the only teacher of man”, does not in my opinion stand or fall on this.

¹² 8.21. Consider the association of words involved in a game such as “charades.”

¹³ 5.15.

¹⁴ “*Nam verbis de verbis agere tam implicatum est, quam digitos digitis inserere et confricare; ubi vix dignoscitur, nisi ab eo ipso qui id agit, qui digiti prurient, et qui auxiliuntur prurientibus.*”

8.21), which includes an assurance of the larger objective of a discussion of signs.¹⁵ Note also that, initially Augustine and Adeodatus take signs to mean spoken words, but they are now taken to include a variety of gestures, images and actions.

At 9.26, Augustine shows Adeodatus that it is better to have knowledge of a thing than a knowledge of its sign, since signs exist on account of the things which they signify: this is a priority both logical and temporal in the order of being. It may be that, in the order of learning, a name can be learned without its signification being known. In such a case, however, Augustine would not say that there is a veritable knowledge of that sign. But can there be knowledge of a thing without a knowledge of its corresponding sign? Signification is necessary to communication, and therefore nothing is taught without signs.¹⁶ Adeodatus convincingly argues that beholding a man walking for a short time does not confer an adequate knowledge of everything one needs to know about walking, such that one could actually do it.¹⁷ In response to this, Augustine offers examples of *things* that are “self-exhibiting”, such as nature and God, but these are only evident as *things* to those who are attentive (*cernentibus*), or particularly intelligent. I think Augustine allows some difficulty to remain in this division (ii.a.). In other contexts, Augustine would say that nature is at best an image or a sign in which a divine order can discerned: what he is describing here as things are clearly signs in a broad sense. They may teach something in a pre-linguistic manner, however. Augustine’s point, then, is a very specific one (10.34): signs,

¹⁵ Cf. *supra*.

¹⁶ 10.31. “*Confecum est igitur et nihil sine signis doceri, et cognitionem ipsam signis quibus cognoscimus, chariorem nobis esse oportere: quamvis non omnia quae significantur possint signis suis esse potiora.*”

¹⁷ The example is flawed, since he does not distinguish between having a scientific or a practical knowledge.

understood as words or names, do not actively confer upon the mind the meaning which they signify. A sign is only meaningful when the thing signified is *in some sense* already known. We learn not by hearing a word, but by looking at a thing.

Here, the apparent carelessness in using the term “knowledge” (*cognitio*) is addressed. As Augustine concludes with a monologue concerning the final division (ii.b.), he speaks of belief (*credere*) as useful and even necessary to knowledge. In this text, belief seems to have the character of Platonic opinion: it is epistemological in scope¹⁸, and is ambiguous in that it may have an object that is false or true. Nevertheless, it is a necessary step in the process of coming to know something. It is precisely this observation that motivates a turn “within” in the argument. If belief is necessary, or else useful, then there must be teachers, or an *auctoritas*, that is absolutely certain. Every rational soul consults the truth that “dwells within” it, both by natural necessity, and as a gift opened to each “according to their capacity.”¹⁹ To say that the soul perceives what is made manifest to it by the truth within does not mean that knowledge is immediate, simple and exhaustive: it may be a knowledge that is held by images, shadows and truthful opinions. It may be a dialectical relation of something perceived, yet not fully possessed.

¹⁸ Despite the quotation from Isaiah at 11.37. Cf. “*Quod ergo intelligo, id etiam credo: at non omne quod credo, etiam intelligo. Omne autem quod intelligo, scio: non omne quod credo, scio. Nec ideo nescio quam sit utile credere etiam multa quae nescio; cui utilitati hanc quoque adiungo de tribus pueris historiam: quare pleraque rerum cum scire non possim, quanta tamen utilitate credantur, scio.*”

¹⁹ 11.38. “*De universis autem quae intelligimus non loquentem qui personat foris, sed intus ipsi menti praesidentem consulimus veritatem, verbis fortasse ut consulamus admoniti. Ille autem qui consulitur, docet, qui in interiore homine habitare dictus est Christus, id est incommutabilis Dei Virtus atque sempiterna Sapientia: quam quidem omnis rationalis anima consulit; sed tantum cuique panditur, quantum capere propter propriam, sive malam sive bonam voluntatem potest. Et si quando fallitur, non fit vitio consultae veritatis, ut neque huius, quae foris est, lucis vitium est, quod corporei oculi saepe falluntur: quam lucem de rebus visibilibus consuli fateamur, ut eas nobis quantum cernere valemus, ostendat.*”

This would not be knowledge in the fullest sense. It does however seem to be knowledge in the most ordinary sense. Augustine compares understanding and sense-perception. Just as the senses receive stimuli in an immediate fashion, so also does the mind receive truths with an “undivided eye”, illumined by the inner truth²⁰—although this picture of knowledge as receptive will be strictly qualified in *mus*. When Augustine teaches Adeodatus truths, the words coming from his mouth are irrelevant to the extent that the two of them stand individually in the same intellectual relation to the truth that illuminates the mind. “Even before I spoke, he could explain these very matters were he questioned”, Augustine says of Adeodatus.

Nevertheless, it is the weakness of our discernment that makes both language and belief epistemologically necessary. *Mag.* concludes with these two observations: Language is necessary, and in particular, accepted conventional meanings, so that communication can occur. While words may not communicate their “hidden” signification, they can *direct* the mind’s attention to something.²¹ By dialectical questioning, a teacher removes the obstructions that stand in the way of the mind’s eye. The activity of the human teacher is therefore largely negative. The positive dimension of teaching is a function of the mind’s relation to the truth which illumines it.²² Belief is also necessary because of the “weakness of our discernment”, and therefore our need for human teachers.

²⁰ 12.40. “*Cum vero de iis agitur quae mente conspiciamus, id est intellectu atque ratione, ea quidem loquimur quae praesentia contuemur in illa interiore luce veritatis, qua ipse qui dicitur homo interior, illustratur et fruitur.*”

²¹ 10.43; 10.35.

²² 12.40. “*Nam quod saepe contingit, ut interrogatus aliquid neget, atque ad id fatendum allis interrogationibus urgeatur, fit hoc imbecillitate cernentis, qui de re tota illam lucem consulere non potest: quod partibus faciat, admonetur, cum de iisdem istis partibus interrogatur, quibus illa summa constat, quam totam cernere non valebat. Quo si verbis perducitur eius qui interrogat, non tamen docentibus verbis, sed eo modo inquiringibus, quo modo est ille a quo quaeritur, intus discere idoneus.*”

Those who cannot discern something with their mind are like those described at the beginning of *ord.* who see things in part since they fail to see the *ratio* of the larger picture. They may nevertheless believe words that they hear, even if they do not understand with their mind.²³ This idea is developed positively in *de utilitate credendi*; here, Augustine is very grudging, since the student might be deceived by false teachers. The only truly reliable teacher is the truth itself, the *magister interior*.

The epistemology of mus.

In *mag.* the only explicit function accorded to memory is the retention of images of things sensed in the past. As images—and not the things themselves—they are in a sense false. Are the images in themselves false (as per Plato), or is it the case that, the thing perceived being absent, the likelihood of false judgment is that much greater? Through judgment we see the images for what they are, as “certain attestations of things sensed previously.” Our mind can therefore consider them, and take them as truthful in the limited manner in which anything can be truthful that is based on sense-perception.²⁴ In a minimal fashion, *mag.* acknowledges the necessity of memory for instruction, both on the part of the one giving and the one receiving. As we have seen in *de ordine* (2.2.7), Augustine says that memory is necessary so that an instructor may gather and retain in an orderly manner the learning that constitutes wisdom, so that he can communicate

²³ 13.41.

²⁴ 12.39. “Cum vero non de iis quae coram sentimus, sed de his quae aliquando sensimus quaeritur; non iam res ipsas, sed imagines ab iis impressas memoriaeque mandatas loquimur: quae omnino quomodo vera dicamus, cum falsa intueamur, ignoro; nisi quia non nos ea videre ac sentire, sed vidisse ac sensisse narramus. Ita illas imagines in memoriae penetralibus rerum ante sensarum quaedam documenta gestamus, quae animo contemplantes bona conscientia non mentimur cum loquimur.”

to his student with knowledge ready at hand. The questioning of the student is a mode of dialectic similar to the marriage of recollection and dialectic that we have argued is one of the fruits of the later dialogues of Plato. In the apparently paradoxical sentence quoted above, Augustine demonstrates the necessity of language: "Even before I spoke, (Adeodatus) could explain these very matters *were he questioned*."²⁵ On a more fundamental level, memory is the foundation for language in that the conventional nature of a variety of signs and prejudices—not only names, but gestures, manners, movements—is taken for granted as a condition for communication.²⁶

Memory however seems to have no real part in knowledge, since the perception of the truth is interior and a function of the illumination of the mind by the truth that indwells it. It is therefore, much like sensation, an instantaneous act.²⁷ Even in the context of instruction, Augustine maintains this position at the conclusion of *mag*.

[Students learn] by looking upon the inner Truth, according to their abilities. That is therefore the point at which they learn. When they inwardly discover that truths have been stated, they offer their praises—not knowing that they are praising them not as teachers but as persons who have been taught, if their teachers also know what they are saying. Men are mistaken in calling persons 'teachers' who are not, which they do generally because there is no delay between the time of speaking and the time of knowing; and since they are quick to learn internally after the prompting of the lecturer, they suppose that they have learned externally from the one who prompted them.²⁸

²⁵ Dialectic is not optional. But is this the case for those who possess a simple but true faith? Are the faithful exempt from Augustine's Platonic suspicion of judgment based on images? This question points to the abiding importance of the role of the Church in Augustine's eyes, and of the role of the bishop as teacher and guardian of the flock.

²⁶ And therefore a condition for community; one can read 14.45 as a criticism of Augustine's early educational experience: "After all, who is so foolishly curious as to send his son to school to learn what the teacher thinks?" Yet even Augustine had to submit to the instruction and other public demands resulting from his admission to the Catholic Church.

²⁷ 12.40; cf. *supra*. This language is familiar from Aristotle.

²⁸ 14.45. "...*Apud semetipsos considerant, interiorem scilicet illam veritatem pro viribus intuentes. Tunc ergo discunt: et cum vera dicta esse intus invenerint, laudant, nescientes non se doctores potius laudare quam doctos; si tamen et illi quod loquuntur sciunt. Falluntur autem*

In this case the word and the thing signified by the word occur in the mind virtually simultaneously. The result is that the student mistakenly draws a false inference about a causal relationship between the sign and the truth signified. In fact, the truth comes to fruition in the minds of both student and teacher simultaneously, or at least in the same manner. There are some practical difficulties with this example; Augustine's point nevertheless stands: knowledge is universal in character, and its existence in the mind is not a result of the formal causality of language. Is it then an accidental result? Augustine certainly allows more than this.

The six books of *De musica* develop this picture, while adding to it significantly as far as our understanding of the role of memory is concerned. As with *mag.*, this work is a self-conscious *exercitatio*, the goal of which is the movement of the mind's eye beyond the sensible to the intelligible. In this case, Augustine is moving from sensible to intelligible number; hence at the end of the fifth book, he concludes: "let this be the end of the discussion, so we may next come with as much wisdom as we can from these sensible traces of music, all dealing with that part of it in the numbers of the times to the real places where it is free of all body."²⁹ In the sixth book, the transition is more dramatic. At 1.1, he describes apologetically the first five books as a "childish delay" and a "triviality"

homines, ut eos qui non sunt magistros vocent, quia plerumque inter tempus locutionis et tempus cognitionis, nulla mora interponitur; et quoniam post admonitionem sermocinantis cito intus discunt, foris se ab eo qui admonuit, didicisse arbitrantur."

²⁹ Transl. R. C. Taliaferro (Fathers of the Church: New York, 1947); Latin text is from Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina* 32; see also the volume in the *Oeuvres de Saint Augustin* series, which reproduces Migne with few corrections. 5.13.28. "*Sed iam si nihil habes quod contradicas, finis sit huius disputationis, ut deinceps quod ad hanc partem musicae attinet quae in numeris temporum est, ab his vestigiis eius sensibilibus, ad ipsa cubilia, ubi ab omni corpore aliena est, quanta valemus sagacitate veniamus.*"

even though it is a “necessary wayfaring.” He urges his readers to turn away from the senses, and turn to the God who instructs the mind in a simple and direct manner.

For we thought this [dutiful labour] only ought to be undertaken so adolescents, or men of any age whom God has endowed with a good natural capacity, might with reason guiding be torn away, not quickly but gradually, from the fleshly senses and letters it is difficult for them not to stick to, and adhere with the love of unchangeable truth to one God and Master of all things who with no mean term whatsoever directs human minds.³⁰

This language speaks to Marrou’s hypothesis that the first chapter is an introduction added later for the sake of those who would read the sixth book as an independent treatise, a tendency that would become the norm in the medieval period.³¹ For those who find this book difficult, Augustine is not recommending that they turn back and struggle their way through five books on meter and verse. Rather, as is urged at the conclusion of *mag.*, they should seek to be nourished in the “precepts of religion.”

Whereas *mag.* is chiefly concerned with language as a species of signs, *mus.* is concerned with “sounding rhythm” as a species of numeric sign. It is therefore natural that memory should be discussed in more detail here, since rhythm, for example, in the hearing of the verse *Deus creator omnium*, concerns the judgment of number expressed in time. Augustine begins by asking “where” abiding number is located, but he refines this question to become one about the

³⁰ “*Quam nostram nugacitatem apud benivolos homines facile fortassis excuset officiosus labor, quem non ob aliud suspiciendum putavimus, nisi ut adolescentes vel cuiuslibet aetatis homines, quos bono ingenio donavit Deus, non praepropere sed quibusdam gradibus a sensibus carnis atque a carnalibus litteris, quibus eos non haerere difficile est, duce ratione avellerentur atque uni Deo et Domino rerum omnium qui humanis mentibus nulla natura interposita praesidet, incommutabilis veritatis amore adhaerescerent.*”

³¹ *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Bibliothèque des Écoles d’Athènes et de Rome: Paris, 1939), pp. 580-583. Jacobsson considers contemporary scholarship and comes out in favour of Marrou’s thesis; he concurs that separation of Book 6 from the rest of the work was permitted by Augustine, although occasioned by reader demand. (See also Letter 101 to Memorius, in which Augustine criticizes the liberal arts for teaching only “fables” and deceits.)

superiority of different faculties or operations, and therefore of different kinds of number.³² In 4.5, Augustine gives an initial ordering of these kinds of number.

³² Here follows a synopsis of the argument of the text.

1.1 Introduction

2.2 Where is rhythm/number?

- a. memory of hearer
- b. act of the one reciting
- c. ears of the hearer
- d. sound heard

4.5 Add to these a faculty of judgment, superior to all

4.6-5.14 Question of superiority of imagination to memory (b. to a.) raises question of the passivity of sense-perception, and manner in which soul is involved

6.16 Return to question of number: which is the greatest?

7.17 Any of these five kinds of number eternal? No.

8.20 Judgment both orders lower number according to its own, and pre-supposes the number of reason

8.21-22 Judgment depends on memory for the former

9.23-24 In the latter, we have reason adding truth (*veritas*) to the delightful

9.26 Reason sees *ordo* or *aequalitas* in the sensible

11.29 For this to happen, soul must be rightly ordered re. bodily: "right affection"

(*"Delectatio quippe quasi pondus est animae. Delectatio ergo ordinat animam."*)

11.31 Affirmation of hierarchical causality in general: soul produces beauty in the physical precisely because it is connected to the numbers that are higher. Memory enables this.

11.32 *Memory A.* Memory re. sensible: distinguish phantasiai and phantasmata; negative dimension of latter. Mutability associated with mortality, and therefore sin. Proper delight can resist habit of flesh.

12.34 *Memory B.* Memory re. spiritual, or eternal. Order, *aequalitas*, sought after in the sensible because it is already known: memory grounds the soul in the truth, which is in neither place nor time. This "knowledge is *in* the soul, and *from* God.

13.37-end. What does it mean to have rightly ordered desire? To have an "active" relation of soul to body? To have a positive valuation of the spiritual over the physical? It is like contemplation, a habit, or a state of being

13.40 Not imitation of God, but a submission to his *ordo*; humility, versus emptiness of pride

14.46 It is not the sensible that demeans the soul, but inordinate love of the sensible; the sensible has a beauty of its own, but must be "esteemed lightly" and "used well" (cf. *doctr. chr.*). The soul must "remain within the bounds of memory" (value of the health of the body, and love of neighbour)

15.50-16.51 Describes a system of sanctification or "vivification"

Prudence: to know one's station

Temperance

Fortitude and Justice

(These virtues abide after death, they describe the relationship between the soul and God, and also (cf. 13.46) the manner in which a memory of bodily life abides eternally)

17.56 Conclusion: number is the principle of creation, since number begins with one, and can therefore include both unity and multiplicity. Time is therefore closely akin to number, and therefore to creation; creation is like a song (*Deus creator omnium*). Angels are an example of the numeric mediation of oneness and multiplicity.

- a. judgment
- b. memory
- c. imagination, or what gives rise to the act of reciting
- d. ears, or sense organ
- e. sound

A discussion at 4.6 questions whether memory is really superior to the imagination, since surely what is productive is greater than what is merely passive and receptive. When numbers pass away from the memory, it is because they have been destroyed by forgetting. When they pass away from the imagination, however, they do so by a natural “cessation” which is the result of the discursive operation of imaginative functions. It is no failure of the imagination that images cease to exist in it, whereas it is the specific task of memory to retain them.

By this account, the *Discipulus* suggests that the sounding numbers (e.) should then be superior to both the sense organ and the imagination (d. and c.) since they cause the latter. This seems to defy the fundamental rule of the superiority of the intelligible over the sensible. To this, the *Magister* replies that it should not be surprising if the soul “suffers” the body:

[The body] has a beauty of its own, and in this way it sets its dignity off to fair advantage in the eyes of the soul. And neither its wound nor its disease has deserved to be without the honour of some ornament. And the highest Wisdom of God designed to assume this wound, by means of a wonderful and ineffable sacrament, when He took upon himself man without sin, but not without the condition of sin. For He was willing to be humanly born, to suffer, and to die. None of these things was accomplished by our merit, but by this most excellent goodness, in order that we might rather look to the pride we most deservingly fell into those things by, than to the humiliations He undeservingly suffered...³³

³³ 4.7. “...quod tamen habet sui generis pulchritudinem et eo ipso dignitatem animae satis commendat, cuius nec plaga et morbus sine honore alicuius decoris meruit esse. Quam plagam summa Dei Sapientia mirabili et ineffabili sacramento dignata est adsumere, cum hominem sine peccato, non sine peccatoris condicione, suscepit. Nam et nasci humaniter et pati et mori voluit, nihil horum merito sed excellentissima bonitate, ut nos magis cavaremus superbiam, qua dignissime in ista cecidimus, quam contumelias, quas indignus exceptit...” The Latin text of Book 6 is from the edition by Martin Jacobsson (Almqvist and Wiksell International: Stockholm, 2002). When noted, we will use his translation as well. Both English translations suffer from different flaws: Taliaferro’s is very awkward and at times grammatically false; Jacobsson’s can be philosophically insensitive. He translates *numerus* as “rhythm” with good reason, although we will not follow this precedent since we are not looking at Books 1-5, and therefore lack that

The Incarnation, as ordered to the restoration of the mortal body, is a blessing upon the physical. Though the soul may be naturally superior to the body, it does not follow that everything that occurs in the soul (e.g. false dreams) is greater than what occurs in the body.³⁴ Either way, both agree that the true is better than the false. To both the soul and the body there is an appropriate kind of number, an appropriate order, and therefore perfection. This language of what is “proper” marks a shift for Augustine, from considering the sensible as what is associated with falsehood simply: the numbers associated with the corporeal are a perfection to the same, and the numbers proper to the soul are likewise a perfection to the soul. Wisdom (*sapientia*) however is not to be found in the corporeal as such.

The idea of an order, if not a perfection, proper to the physical realm is an idea familiar from *ord.*³⁵ Likewise familiar is the inversion of the order of argument proposed above. At 5.8, Augustine says that we cannot only move from sounding numbers to the numbers by which they are judged. The numbers of “divine wisdom” are received directly from God, and by the mediation of the human soul, they are impressed on the body. Augustine must show how the numbers received by intellect enable the knowledge of the numbers received through the senses. Appropriately, the body must be shown to be a tool for the soul, as something used in an active, causal manner.

context. As an example, at 4.7, Jacobsson renders “*mirare potius, quod facere aliquid in anima corpus potest*” as “you should rather be astonished by the fact that the body is able to create anything at all in the soul.” Later he translates “*facere*” more appropriately as “produce.” Taliferro uses the more ambiguous, and therefore safer, “make.”

³⁴ 4.7; cf. also *mag.* 9.26.

³⁵ See also *mus.* 9.28, where he says that corporeal things can only imitate true equality. An observer can be deceived about whether certain things are truly equal in their measurements; he nevertheless allows that, insofar as they imitate, they are “beautiful in their kind and order.”

At this point, we have Augustine's most detailed account of the relation between the soul and external stimuli, and it is one partly familiar from Plotinus. Feeling, Augustine says, is the result of the soul "paying attention" to the interaction of thing and body; if the interaction is easy, there is pleasure; if it is difficult, there is pain.³⁶ In both cases, there are two distinct movements: the stimulation of the sense organ, and the awareness, or "observation", by the soul. Thus the soul, strictly speaking, is not affected; it "pays attention." A third element here enters in, so that the soul can distinguish not simply between pleasure and pain, but between what is good and what is harmful in the full moral sense. There must, he says, be a mediating sense which is subject to both body and soul, "an instrument of the body directed by the soul for its ordering so the soul may be more prepared to act on the passions of the body with attention of joining like things to like and of repelling what is harmful."³⁷ By this "bodily" instrument, the soul has an agent, as it were, in each of the senses, much as judgment may function in sense-perception for Aristotle.³⁸

The soul attends to the body out of concern for the survival of the person. Certainly, it is less "with itself" when it does so; this is the natural state of affairs, and a proper harmony, a bodily attention that is not a "distraction", will have to wait until the resurrection of the body. This harmony, again, is conceived in terms of a proper subordination of soul to God, and in this, of body to soul.³⁹ Though

³⁶ 5.9

³⁷ "*Sed iste sensus, qui, etiam dum nihil sentimus, inest tamen, instrumentum est corporis, quod ea temperatione agitur ab anima, ut in eo sit ad passiones corporis cum attentione agendas paratior, similia similibus ut adiungat repellatque quod noxium est.*"

³⁸ I.e. through the "calculative imagination"; *de anima* 434a5.

³⁹ 5.13-14. This language is familiar from Origen, for example, the *de principiis*, in which he describes the tripartite person (spirit, soul and body) as in a state of disharmony, represented in the struggle between the mind and the "flesh." The resurrection of the body involves the subordination of spirit to God, soul to spirit, and so on, with the perhaps unique (and certainly

the natural state is one fraught with expected difficulty, there is hope because “we have a memory of the good.” The soul that is not yet “extinguished by sin”, that can still look to its own care, is said to be yet dwelling “in memory.”⁴⁰

*Motus igitur animae servans inpetum suum et nondum extinctus in memoria esse dicitur, et cum in aliud intenditur animus, quasi non inest animo pristino motus, et revera minor fit, nisi, antequam intercidat, quadam similium vicinitate renovetur.*⁴¹

Preceding this passage by several sentences, memory, specifically its *tumultuoses recordationes*, is blamed as that which permits “carnal occupations” to disturb the soul. A kind of memory that is not simply linked to perception in a passive manner is suggested, and will be developed much later in the text.

At 6.16, Augustine returns to the question of which numbers are superior, those that pertain to c., d., or e. Here we are introduced to terminology by which we can distinguish between the kind of number and the faculties or operation to which they pertain. Curiously, the list of five faculties is presented again as corresponding to the kinds of number, but in this instance memory suffers a demotion.

a. judgment	i. <i>iudicales</i>
b. imagination	ii. <i>progressores</i>
c. ears, or sense organ	iii. <i>occursores</i>
d. memory	iv. <i>recordabiles</i>
e. sound	v. <i>sonantes</i>

foreign to Augustine) result of the dissolution of the term “soul”, so that Origen is left with man as spirit and transformed body. I mention this in part because the phrase from Romans 7:24 (“Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”) is key both for Origen’s argument, as well as for Augustine here in 5.13.

⁴⁰ The sense of “extinguished” here is not clearly of substantial destruction as in the “second death” of *civ.* 13.2.3, but rather the “first”, the spiritual distance from God.

⁴¹ 5.14; Jacobsson’s translation is fairly literal. “And so when the motion of the soul preserves its impulse and is not yet extinguished, it is said to be in the memory, and when the mind directs its attention to something else, as if the previous motion were not present to it, that motion does in fact become smaller, unless it is renewed by the vicinity of something similar before it ceases to exist.” In the context of this paragraph, the “something similar” is the master (*dominus*) of the soul, or at the very least what is “interior” to the soul, giving rise to its calm.

The placement of memory in this list is likely due to the fact that, up to now, Augustine speaks of memory as passive, mediating perception and the mutability of sensible phenomena. He is certain that one cannot perceive the briefest stimulus without memory since there is always a certain passage of time, however small, just as the eyes, in order to behold something three-dimensional, must see the various sides of an object.⁴²

The ranking of these numbers is less important since, as Augustine observes, none of them are “eternal.”⁴³ The judgment of man reflects the temporal nature of that which it judges. It is therefore limited in appropriate ways: since a man must sleep, he cannot listen to a rhythm that is extended over the period of a month. Memory is necessary for any judgment as holding together a beginning and an end, and therefore actually constituting a rhythm as a whole. Augustine describes this, like in *ord.*, as a reception of a higher *ordo*, which in turn is conferred on what is lower. Memory is thus oriented in a twofold manner, mediating the higher to the lower, the inner to the outer. Hence, the judicial numbers bring a superior order to the lower kinds of number through the memory. Memory in turn assists the judgment in comprehending the seemingly boundless “diversity” (*varietas*) of what occurs in time. Even the lower (reactive) numbers also manifest the *ratio* of the memorial numbers.

But are there numbers that transcend the limitations of the physical?

Augustine appeals to reason as that which “adds truth to delight.” It is reason that

⁴² 8.21. “*Quamlibet enim brevis syllaba cum et incipiat et desinat, alio tempore initium eius et alio finis sonat. Tenditur ergo et ipsa quantulumcumque temporis intervallo et ab initio suo per medium suum tendit ad finem. Ita ratio invenit tam localia quam temporalia spatia infinitam divisionem recipere, et idcirco nullius syllabae cum initio finis auditur. In audienda itaque vel brevissima syllaba nisi memoria nos audiuvet, ut eo momento temporis, quo iam non initium sed finis syllabae sonat, maneat ille motus in animo, qui factus est, cum initium ipsum sonuit, nihil nos audisse possumus dicere.*”

⁴³ 7.17-19.

enables the judgment to appraise not simply what is delightful, but what is rightly or wrongly delightful.⁴⁴ Reason can abstract the intelligible from the sensible, and can therefore discern an *ordo* of a higher nature in the sensible, here called *aequalitas*. What is it that we love when we delight in sensible harmony? It is equality, order or *ratio*. Sensible things in themselves can only imitate this equality, although this imitation is the result of veritable participation. As such, they manifest a beauty of their own—though certainly a lesser order of beauty than that of intelligible equality.

And what is worse than error and inequality? And so we are advised to turn away from the enjoyment of things imitating equality. For we cannot perceive whether they perfectly fill out their time, although we can perhaps perceive they do not perfectly do so. And yet in so far as they imitate we cannot deny they are beautiful in their kind and order.⁴⁵

When reason enters into the argument, the picture is made complete and blossoms to grant us a larger perspective upon what Augustine is after: a vision of creation as an ordered hierarchy of goods, the lower appropriately subject to the higher. This theme, initially articulated in *ord.*, becomes the central theme of *mus.* 6. We shall quote Chapter 11.29 in full.

Let us not, then, be envious of things inferior to ourselves, and let us, our Lord and God helping, order ourselves between those below us and those above us, so we are not troubled by lower, and take delight only in higher things. For delight is a kind of weight in the soul. Delight therefore orders the soul. 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' Where delight, there the treasure; where the heart, there happiness or misery. But what are the higher things, if not those where the highest unchangeable undisturbed and eternal equality resides? Where there is no time, because there is no change, and from where times are made and ordered and changed, imitating eternity as they do when the turn of the heavens comes back to the same state, and the heavenly bodies to the same place, and in days and months and years and centuries and other

⁴⁴ 9.23. Reason at 9.24 usurps the name of "judgment" or "judicial numbers."

⁴⁵ 10.28 (trans. Taliaferro). "*Quo errore et inaequalitate quid turpius? Ex quo admonemur ab his avertere gaudium, quae imitantur aequalitatem; et utrum inpleant, non comprehendere possumus, immo, quod non impleant, fortasse comprehendimus; et tamen, in quantum imitantur, pulchra esse in genere suo et in ordine suo negare non possumus.*"

revolutions of the stars obey the laws of equality, unity and order. So terrestrial things are subject to celestial, and their time circuits join together in harmonious succession for a poem of the universe.⁴⁶

As in *ord.*, Augustine observes that the harmony and unity of the created order may not be obvious, but that this is due to a limitation of perspective. The soul, specifically its *delectatio*, must nevertheless attempt to be rightly ordered to what is above and below it, as receptive to the *ordo* of what is higher, and as formative of the beauty and *aequalitate* of what is lower. This affirmation of the active, mediatory position of soul ushers in the most detailed discussion of memory in *mus*.

There are two fundamental kinds or aspects of memory: that which pertains to the sensible and changing, and that which pertains to the intelligible and eternal. Augustine speaks here in unprecedented detail of the latter. That it is memory of which Augustine speaks is notable, for it is an acknowledgement of the fact that what is supra-temporal must be received by the mind in a temporal manner. The lower sense of memory develops in a crucial manner here as well.

Augustine distinguishes between a positive and a negative operation of memory. He differentiates between *phantasiai* and *phantasmata*.⁴⁷ The former has what O'Daly describes as a "passive" nature; this should be qualified to include an active theory of sensation as we have described it. The term is accurate

⁴⁶ "Non ergo invidemus inferioribus quam nos sumus, nosque ipsos inter illa, quae infra nos sunt, et illa, quae supra nos sunt, ita Deo et Domino nostro opitulante ordinemus, ut inferioribus non offendamur, solis autem superioribus delectemur. Delectatio quippe quasi pondus est animae. Delectatio ergo ordinat animam. 'Ubi enim erit thesaurus tuus, ibi erit et cor tuum', ubi delectatio, ibi thesaurus, ubi autem cor, ibi beatitudo aut miseria. Quae vero superiora sunt nisi illa, in quibus summa, inconcussa, incommutabilis, aeterna manet aequalitas, ubi nullum est tempus, quia mutabilitas nulla est, et unde tempora fabricantur et ordinantur et modificantur aeternitatem imitantia, dum caeli conversio ad idem redit et caelestia corpora ad idem revocat, diebusque et mensibus et annis ac lustris ceterisque siderum orbibus legibus aequalitatis et unitatis et ordinationis obtemperat? Ita caelestibus terrena subiecta orbes temporum suorum numerosa successione quasi carmini universitas adsociant."

⁴⁷ 11.32. See *vera rel.* 64 on *phantasmata* as falsehoods.

insofar as it signifies memory as containing simply the images that it has received through bodily experience. By contrast, *phantasmata* have an inherent falseness, since they are the result of a 'creative' combination of images intended to replace actual, experiential knowledge. These are the product of what we might call 'fantasizing', for example, trying to bring to mind the image of a face of a person that one has either never seen or not seen for a long time, though one may have heard reports or seen reproduced images. Rather than blaming error upon what is based on the senses simply, he attributes it instead to *phantasmata*, which are products of the combination of sense images. It is those who live by *phantasmata* as the final truth who live "the life of opinion."⁴⁸ Augustine affirms that the sensible things upon which memory (as it contains *phantasiai*) is based have a beauty and order of their own, despite their fleeting nature. Augustine blames this upon human mortality, and therefore sin, in a familiar but often misleading trope.

But if rhythms of this kind, which are produced in the soul that is dedicated to things corporeal, have a beauty of their own, although it is not in a permanent way that they activate it, why should the divine providence look askance at this beauty, which is formed out of the mortality that we received as punishment? This mortality we have deserved through God's most just law, but he did not abandon us in it in such a way that we would not be capable of returning and being called back from the *pleasure* of the carnal senses by his mercy that stretches out his hand.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ 11.32. "However, to consider also *phantasmata* to be knowledge is indeed the worst kind of error, although there is some reason in both cases to say that we know, that is to say, that we have perceived certain things and imagine others. Finally, that I have had a father and a grandfather I can truthfully say; but I would be fool to say that they are what my mind keeps in a *phantasia* or *phantasma*. But many follow their *phantasmata* so impetuously, that there is no other ground for all their false opinions." (*"Sed vero etiam phantasmata habere pro cognitis summus error est, quamquam sit in utroque genere, quod nos non absurde scire dicamus, id est, sensisse nos talia vel imaginari nos talia. Patrem denique me habuisse et avum non temere possum dicere; ipsos autem esse, quos animus meus in phantasia vel phantasmata tenet, dementissime dixereim. Sequuntur autem non nulli phantasmata sua tam praecipites, ut nulla sit alia materies omnium falsarum opinionum."*)

⁴⁹ 11.33. "*Cur autem, si huiusmodi numeri, qui fiunt in anima rebus temporalibus dedita, habent sui generis pulchritudinem, quamvis eam transeundo actitent, invidet huic pulchritudini divina providentia, quae de nostra poenali mortalitate formatur? Quam iustissima Dei lege meruimus, in qua tamen nos non ita deseruit, ut non valeamus recurrere et a carnalium sensuum delectatione misericordia eius manum porrigente revocari."*

It is precisely the Incarnation that embodies this “merciful outstretching”: it is not only the interior *Magister* who calls out to the mind, but the incarnate Christ who reaches out to heal the whole person.⁵⁰ For man’s part, this appears as the transformation of the active “theory” of sensation into the active habituation of body, or the “flesh”, put in subjection to the soul. The senses are no longer blamed for their intrinsic falsehood, but for being an occasion for the habit of the flesh, for “carnal affection” *concupiscentia*. This habit, says Augustine, can be broken by raising the mind to “spiritual things”, more precisely, by taking delight in the numbers of reason insofar as they inform lower, bodily things. Delight is not simply derived from spiritual principles in themselves, but from these principles insofar as they enliven and actively inform. The relation of *phantasiai* is necessary, since by memory and imagination the judicial numbers are mediated and actually give rise to the number of lower things. From the opposite perspective, memory and imagination are necessary so that man can retain the images of bodily experience such that their inherent *ratio* may become manifest. Upon this basis, Augustine will later argue for the continuity of memory in the life of the resurrection.

There is another function to memory, however, since it takes in not only “carnal motions” but also spiritual. Augustine is not describing another kind of memory, as Plotinus might deem necessary. This is a development of the idea that the judicial numbers, in order to truly enable judgment, must be grounded in reason. The equality that is sought in the sensible, he says, could only be desired were it already known “somewhere.” Here at last Augustine makes a liberating

⁵⁰ By contrast with *mag.*, there are in this text several extended meditations on the mortality of the body as the result of sin, and the felicitous effects of the Incarnation, chiefly the resurrection of the body; cf. *supra*, as well as 11.33; cf. 14.45 on the love of one’s neighbour.

clarification: “but this ‘somewhere’ is not situated in local or temporal spaces, since the first swell and the others pass away.”⁵¹ This marks a move beyond the limitations of the language of “location” that troubled *imm. an.* Truth, or true spiritual principles, have no physical location; they are distinguished by the immutable mode in which they possess the attributes of truthfulness. To remember something like this is not therefore like remembering a sounding rhythm, the syllables of which could be uttered for different durations on different occasions. Rather it is like remembering the principles by which we judge the distinctive equality and ratio that constitute a pleasing and correct rhythm. Augustine compares this to remembering a truth such as “two and two make four”⁵²: it is truth about which, if knowledge is verily present, there can be no uncertainty. And this kind of truth, Augustine concludes, is *in* the soul, though *from* God.

Augustine asks a necessary and final question. If unchangeable spiritual truth resides in the soul, how can a man turn away from it such that he seems to forget it? This question introduces an important qualification of the picture of the immutable soul found in the earliest dialogues.

So what remains is for us to look for what is inferior [to eternal equality]. But is the soul not the first thing you come to think of, which certainly admits that equality to be unchangeable but realizes that it is itself changed by the very fact that it is sometimes intent upon this unchangeable equality, at other times upon something else, and, by following different things in this way, activates a variety of times, which does not exist in the eternal and unchangeable things?⁵³

⁵¹ 12.34. “*Hoc autem alicubi non in spatiis locorum et temporum, nam et illa tument et illa praeterunt.*”

⁵² 12.35.

⁵³ 13.37. “*Restat ergo, ut quaeramus, quid sit inferius. Sed nonne tibi prius ipsa anima occurrit, quae certe aequalitatem illam incommutabilem esse confitetur, se autem agnoscit mutari eo ipso, quod alias hanc alias aliud intuetur, et hoc modo aliud atque aliud sequens varietatem temporis operator, quae in aeternis et incommutabilibus nulla est?*” Compare this with the concern to maintain the unchanging nature and natural immortality of the soul in *imm. an.*

The use of the verb *operatur* raises many interesting questions. A minimal interpretation finds that the soul, being multiple in its possible objects, can behold what is eternal, but only in a temporal, fleeting manner. As such, it cannot adhere to the eternal (*aeternis inhaerere*) in a simple and permanent way. We have seen in previous texts the benefit of memory, in that it gathers in what is multiple (*varietas*) over time so that it may be comprehensible to the mind's eye as a considered unity. *Mus.* raises the question of whether mind can transcend the discursive mode of knowing delineated by memory. If the mind depends in a necessary manner on memory for knowledge, what sort of apprehension of truth does it attain? Augustine says that truth makes an imprint on the mind even while remaining distinct from the mind—since identical with God—and accordingly the soul is changeable depending on whether it is oriented to the eternal or the variable. It is indeed a divided, even tragic, state for soul to occupy, and it is Augustine's insight that this is the price of a certain freedom of the will.

The soul becomes like the good that it desires through a return, a restoration to itself. As we have seen, Augustine is more careful here than before to emphasize that things beneath the soul have an appropriate beauty. Likewise, normal functions that presuppose the life of the body are not only necessary but good: attending to the health of the body, giving necessary approval or disapproval to stimuli, and most importantly, engaging in activities that promote the love of one's neighbour. Augustine describes all these as "being within the bounds of memory."⁵⁴ These are done rightly, however, only by the soul that looks to the eternal, clinging to it as its source and end. While the life of the body

⁵⁴ 14.45, in which he is clearly contrasting memory as pertains to *phantasiai*, to memory as serving *phantasmata*.

is properly described in terms of activity; this “clinging” of the soul to God is described as a state of being, a form of habituation: an activity, to be sure, but one attuned to a core of stillness. It is not a “striving”, nor an imitation, but rather submission. In language that is again familiar from *ord.*, the soul’s peace comes from the recognition of its place in a larger, providential order. Augustine speaks here of this submission as a programme of sanctification charted by the cultivation of certain virtues. These virtues do not describe an ascent in the sense of the “seven steps” of *an. quant.*, but rather an education and formation that is ongoing whether in the earthly life or the blessed.

Prudence is the foundational virtue: it is that whereby the soul knows its “proper station.”⁵⁵ The other virtues are essentially evocations of prudence, all having the same goal of the soul’s being ordered to God. By temperance, the soul conquers the habit of loving the beauty of inferior things. By fortitude, the soul is no longer afraid of death and the concomitant loss of worldly things. By justice, the soul is made subject to God, and dominant over lesser things, although co-equal with “pure souls.” The soul that sees God will be made “like him”; at that time, all *phantasmata* will be erased, but these virtues, and the struggle against the habit of the flesh with which they are involved, will abide. What does this mean? If memory abides, does sin abide? Rather, the process of growth, education, increasing love, is continuous. A fixed and unchanging relationship is established between the soul and God, in which *delectatio* is exercised and increased, since God continues to draw the soul to himself by “sweetness.” This is participation and joy in God, circumscribed by the humility of “prudence.” As participation, the soul seeking the eternal shares in the attributes of truth and peace.

⁵⁵ 15.50; cf. also 13.37 for *prudencia*. Temperance is also described at 50.51 as *caritas*.

Conclusion to Part II

Augustine concludes *mus.* by returning to number as a “principle of creation”, and therefore a principle of order and providential care. Number “begins from one” and, much as for Plato, it describes a way in which the mind can comprehend the passage from oneness to multiplicity within time. In a less abstract form, time does much the same thing in creation: it charts the emergence of being from nothing on a cosmic scale, and therefore the mediation of the spatial and non-spatial.¹ To explain creation is to explain time, and Augustine’s first systematic attempt begins where we shall turn next, the final books of *conf.* Certainly this is not a predominant theme, either in the *Cassiciacum* or the Roman dialogues; but we have observed the recurring presence of number as an attempt on Augustine’s part to enter into the problem of unity and order—more obliquely in *Acad.*, less obliquely in *ord.*—specifically motivated by an appreciation of the Christian understanding of creation.

Augustine assumes the ontological superiority of intelligible reality and the corresponding spiritual value that stems from this. A generally Platonic conviction is thereby transformed, by seeing the relationship between physical and intelligible in terms of submission and humility, into a distinctively Augustinian trope. The distinct elements of this are not new: humility is not a Christian novelty. Yet here it is at the center of everything, ontological and epistemological. Conceiving this humility in the terms of the doctrine of the Incarnation in turn demands a renewed valuation of the physical: the microcosm reveals the macrocosm. The movement from spiritual condition to cosmic reality again points to the argument of *conf.* 10-12. *Mus.* points the reader to *conf.*

¹ Cf. 17.56.

because the anthropology that has been drawn out from *imm. an.*, *sol.* and *an. quant.* is inserted into the cosmological context of *ord.* and given greater detail.

Unity on the anthropological level is our concern with respect to memory. Memory is potentially a divisive factor given that it links the soul inextricably to its bodily life. Plotinus' solution is, on the one hand, to save mind from memory altogether, and on the other hand to lend memory a therapeutic function, a hope for reform for a fallen soul. For Augustine, fully appreciating the unity of soul and body, and more importantly, appreciating the theological implications and spiritual hope of the Incarnation, this is not an adequate solution. He must accept a natural mutability proper to the soul's very essence, marked by the extent to which the soul tends to become more or less "like" God. He still will maintain a certain "natural immortality", but he will clearly distinguish this in *trin.* from the immortality of blessedness. Memory will be central in the establishment of a relationship between the soul and the God upon which the life of the soul depends. It will therefore be a relationship duly hindered by a time-bound mode of knowledge, a restless, inescapable discursivity. Accepting that the soul lives in a sort of constant dissolution, and yet in the hope of the promise of the Incarnation, marks the next stage in the argument about the place of memory in Augustine's writings.

PART III:

CONFESSIONES AND DE TRINITATE

CHAPTER 7:

INTRODUCTION: *CONFESSIONES* 10

The tenth book of *conf.* is famous for its extended treatment of memory, and any scholar wishing to understand Augustine's singular interest in memory will normally begin and end with a reading of its first half.¹ We shall attempt to be more contextual, asking not only about the nature of memory, but rather how it functions in the argument of the tenth book, and how a pre-occupation with the temporal conditions of embodiment move the transition into the final books: time as a creaturely by-product of creation *ex nihilo*, and the attempt to discern a new perspective on temporality both through the interpretation of Scripture as the mind of the Church and the foundation of the community of the Church in the "heaven of heavens." We will not neglect the argument of the tenth book, but include brief remarks in this transitional chapter. Our position is that the argument of *conf.* insofar as it concerns memory, is not complete with the tenth book. Hence a more detailed discussion in the two subsequent chapters will examine the eleventh and twelfth books.

Augustine marks the tenth book of *conf.* as a point of transition in a variety of ways. The ninth book closes with the death of his mother Monica, for whom

¹ G.J.P. O'Daly, "Augustine on the measurement of time: some comparisons with Aristotelian and Stoic texts", in H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus, eds., *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought* (London: Variorum, 1981), pp. 171-179; "Time as *distentio* and St. Augustine's exegesis of Philippians 3:12-14", in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 23 (1977), pp. 265-271. G. Soehnigen, "Der Aufbau der Augustinischen Gedächtnislehre (*Confessions* X, c.6-27)" in *Aurelius Augustinus, Die Festschrift der Görres-Gesellschaft zum 1500 (Todestage des heiligen Augustinus: Köln, 1930)*, pp. 63-100; K. Winkler, "La théorie augustinienne de la mémoire à son point de départ" in *Augustinus Magister* 1, pp. 511-519; M. Moreau, "Mémoire et durée", *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 1 (1955), pp. 239-250; L. Cilleruelo, "La memoria Dei según san Agustín", in *Augustinus Magister* 1, pp. 491-509.

he now sheds a “different sort of tears.”² Augustine realizes that, while Monica has been for him a model of saintly virtue her whole life long, he nevertheless cannot know the “secret sins” that may have been committed in the depths of her heart. Before the impartiality of divine justice, Augustine can only pray for mercy and forgiveness. The tenth book is a new attempt at the confession of Augustine’s soul in light of this stark truth. The first nine books are in an obvious sense “historical.” Augustine speaks now not of what he has been, but of what he is.³ What precisely is new here? Augustine suggests one way in which to explain the matter: the “first” confession is of the exterior life, and the “new” confession—more severe, more discerning—is of the interior life. While this analysis contains an element of truth, it is not adequate. Acknowledging the rhetorical artifice of the earliest accounts of his youth, one cannot claim that Augustine has neglected to examine the problems of will and desire when considering his infantile greed, his adolescent lust or his mature conversion. What troubles Augustine now is the fact that he has an intuition of the righteousness of the divine, and yet, despite being baptized and fully a member of the Church, he finds himself in the same position still. Augustine believes as he did in his early writings that the soul has a certain natural kinship with the truth. But he finds that, in carefully examining his soul, it is a house divided: he is, he says, a question to himself. The flesh is at war with the spirit, and “which side has the victory [he yet] knows not.”⁴

² 9.13.34. “*Aliud lacrimarum genus.*” We are using Chadwick’s translation, with occasional modifications (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992); the Latin text is found in the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* Vol. 27, which reproduces in a revised form (by Luc Verheijen) the text of M. Skutella (Teubner: Leipzig, 1934), which is found in volumes 13-14 of the *Bibliothèque Augustinienne* (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris, 1962) with the admirable French translation and notes of A. Solignac.

³ 10.4.6.

⁴ 10.28.39.

The fact that he speaks now of “what he is” tells us that he is laying before his readers the abiding condition of the embodied soul. He is also bringing into question the very possibility of coherent narrative, of fruitful confession, since what he tells of is already past. He is a creature of memory and expectation, divided and spread out like a psalm written on a page, contained as some sort of whole, in no one obvious place. It is therefore a problem of unity, or order, familiar from *ord.* as well as *mus.* Augustine speaks in much more detail here about memory: memory is not simply the way in which the soul retains and meaningfully assimilates present perception and past experiences. Memory is the embodied soul’s mode of approaching God. There is no possibility of simple apprehension in the soul’s present condition, since the time-bound mode of knowledge is infinitely different from the simple and unified: though God, as maker, is intimately present to the soul, the soul is always “late” to grace, always one step “behind.” The soul’s approach to God is complex and truly dialectical. For Augustine, what is known is at once remembered and loved, or willed. The memory is that which brings the desired object before the mind’s eye in its appropriate manner, making what is absent, present; the will unites the man with the thing that it desires, but lacks. The Platonic problem of knowledge that introduces the argument of *mag.* is expanded to become the defining motif of Augustine’s psychology and spirituality. Faith as uniting the soul with its object is not only epistemologically necessary, as Augustine shows in *util. cred.*, but is also spiritually imperative if the soul is to fulfill its naturally intended end.

Augustine’s argument begins with the assurance that he has some sort of memory of God. The discussion of memory in the tenth book furthers this same question that has pre-occupied Augustine at least since *sol.*, the question of the

mode of presence of the soul to God, and therefore of God to the soul. “*Nihil longe est Deo*”; “nothing is far from God”, Monica cries as she dies. Once again, Augustine seeks to prove the truth of his mother’s faithful wisdom.

The tenth book is not therefore about memory simply. It takes up anew the question with which *conf.* opened: “grant me Lord to know and understand.”⁵ By faith, Augustine rightly seeks after and rightly asks where God is to be found (2.2), who God is (4.4) and what God is (5.5). Scripture tells Augustine that God is perfectly good, powerful, merciful and just; hidden yet intimately present; immutable yet changing all things; perfect in the action of love, and yet perfect in rest.⁶ But in these words of Scripture, Augustine says, “what have I said, my God, my life, my sweetness? What has anyone achieved in words when he speaks about you?” The words signify little to Augustine, for he sees that his soul is an unfit dwelling for God, a place of disorder. In *mag.*, Augustine affirms that a knowledge of things is to be much preferred over a knowledge of signs. In *conf.*, to know the thing itself is to be assimilated to it, to become like it, whereas a knowledge of words, however true the words might themselves be, without a concomitant transformation of the self, is no knowledge at all. Augustine wants to be actually changed by the divine presence, to welcome his creator in his heart, and so he cries out at the conclusion of the ninth book: “cleanse me from my secret faults.”⁷ He does not know himself, and the spiritual mysteriousness of the self; linking this mysteriousness to sin is a hallmark of Augustinian interiority. Hence, the question of the knowledge of God is subsumed by the question of

⁵ 1.1.1.

⁶ 10.4.4.

⁷ Cf. 1.5.6.

becoming God-like, and if this omniscient God should act as a judge, “taking note of iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?”

The tenth book continues this argument: “may I know you, who know me. May I know as I also am known. Power of my soul, enter into it and fit it for yourself, so that you may have and hold it without spot or blemish. This is my hope and that is why I speak.”⁸ Augustine wants to be like God, by approach to God; when he comes to see the dark places of his soul, the truth, he says, will shine out, and he will choose the truth, rejecting what is dark and disorderly, and thereby he will do the truth. In this sense, he is discovering no new thing about himself (2.2). He knows the weaknesses of his soul, especially as they pertain to the habits of the flesh. No longer recounting an historical narrative, and therefore freed from the guilt associated with past deeds, he turns within to his memory to attempt to locate the truth within his person, as abstracted from particular historical events.

There is another dimension to the transition from the ninth to the tenth books that is essential to understanding the final books altogether. The first nine books, Augustine says, are about the past sins that he has committed, and they have been written for the Church so that the morally weak may be encouraged by Augustine’s hope that he can become like God, that he can know as he is known; they have also been written so that the faithful may rejoice in Augustine’s small victories, and give thanks to God who is their origin.⁹ What in this respect is unfinished, and why does he feel an obligation to his community to explain what he “now is”? Is this pastorally wise? And if the things he is seeking, by his own account, often remain shrouded in darkness in the depths of a man’s soul, why

⁸ 10.1.1.

⁹ 10.3.4.

attempt to unearth them in a public context? This exercise attests to Augustine's conviction about the universal nature of truth, and the manner in which truth and the soul are inextricably linked: this is most fully seen in this book (20.29) in the classical argument about the manner in which all men desire to be happy, whether rightly or not.¹⁰ Despite the private and interior character of this confession, Augustine expects that any who read it will likewise rightly lament what he finds to be evil, and rightly rejoice in what he finds in himself that is good. He expects there to be a genuine *positive* commonality of experience with this confession that could not have existed with the first nine books.

In the second book of *conf.*, Augustine addresses his audience, admonishing them, lest they think themselves free from the sinful impulses described by Augustine in that book. His point is that the work of his liberation is one of grace, both as healing and preventing.

What shall I render to the Lord, who recalls these things to my memory, while my soul feels no fear from the recollection. I will love you, Lord, and I will give thanks and confession to your name because you have forgiven me such great evils and my nefarious deeds. I attribute to your grace and mercy that you have melted my sins away like ice. I also attribute to your grace whatever evil acts I have not done.... No one who considers his frailty would dare to attribute to his own strength his chastity and innocence, so that he has less cause to love you—as if he had less need of your mercy by which you forgive the sins of those converted to you.¹¹

¹⁰ On Augustine's "eudémonisme" see p. 568 of Solignac's *Notes Complémentaires*: "La volonté de vie heureuse, intimement liée à la volonté de vérité, joue donc un rôle prépondérant dans la pensée augustinienne. On doit y voir comme le ressort du dynamisme de l'esprit dans la connaissance et l'action, l'*intentio* fondamentale de l'âme humaine vers sa fin; *intentio* qui repose d'ailleurs sur une *notio impressa beatitatis* (*lib. arb.* 2.9.26), c'est-à-dire sur une norme *a priori* de l'idée de bonheur, antérieure à toute expérience. Et comme Dieu seul est à la mesure de ce vœu radical de l'âme humaine, comme il est la seule fin illuminatrice et béatifiante de l'homme, la volonté de bonheur et de vérité fait entendre à tout homme l'appel incessant vers la recherche et la découverte de Dieu." Cf. *conf.* 1.1.1 where the junction of the true and the good is located in the *cor*: "Our heart is restless until it rests in you."

¹¹ 2.7.15. "*Quid retribuam domino, quod recolit haec memoria mea et anima mea non metuit inde? Diligam te, domine, et gratias agam et confitear nomini tuo, quoniam tanta dimisisti mihi mala et nefaria opera mea. Gratiae tuae deputo et misericordiae tuae, quod peccata mea tanquam glaciem soluisti. Gratiae tuae deputo et quaecunque non feci mala.... Quis est hominum, qui suam cogitans infirmitatem audet viribus suis tribuere castitatem atque innocentiam suam, ut*

Augustine describes the theft of pears that he undertook with his friends as “a nothing.” It was a desire for power which in the end produced nothing of substance, only the illusion both of power and even more terribly, the illusion of friendship. He would not have stolen were it not for the illusion of fellowship provided by his friends: “therefore my love in the act was to be associated with the gang in whose company I did it.”¹²

By contrast, in the tenth book, he is writing specifically for the *animus fraternus*, the Christian brother, who will recognize not only his own weakness, but the essential fact that God alone is worthy of praise and love. As his childish gang moved him to “nothing”, now the community of lovers of God moves him to the act of praise and love. He is still sick, still spiritually an infant, but in the strength of the community of the Church, he subjects himself to God’s providential order and care.¹³

It is not then simply an epistemological observation that Augustine, in confessing the deeds of his youth, can recall things to his memory without fear or distress. This psychological peace is the result of his hope being entirely in God. His conviction that God not only rescued him in his youth, but even now will not allow him to come to harm, buoys him and enables confession to move forward. The universality of God’s mercy is greater than the universality of sin. This is the

minus amet te, quasi minus ei necessaria fuerit misericordia tua, qua donas peccata conversis ad te?”

¹² 2.8.16.

¹³ 10.4.6. Hence the emphasis throughout this book is on God’s will, God’s command. “For my part, I carry out your command by actions and words; but I discharge it under the protection of your wings. It would be a far too perilous responsibility unless under your wings my soul were submissive to you. My weakness is known to you. I am a child. But my Father ever lives and my protector is sufficient to guard me.” (“*Et ego id ago factis et dictis, id ago sub alis tuis, nimis cum ingenti periculo, nisi quia sub alis tuis tibi subdita est anima mea et infirmitas mea tibi nota est. Parvulus sum, sed vivit semper pater meus et idoneus est mihi tutor meus.*”)

hope shared specifically by those readers who claim membership in the Church. As such, this confession can both presuppose and ultimately nourish a community of Christian charity, a *civitas Dei* that can truly sympathize with and be lead by Augustine's example. The social memory of the Church is not here ordered toward past deeds, but to the active recollection of a merciful and steadfast God. It looks forward in expectation of an eschatologically realized hope. Most fully, it is ordered to the present, to the progressive realization of truth "in the inner parts." This Church is not (as with the Donatists) a community of the perfect, but rather of those who, in fear and trembling for the sin in which they share, praise God as the peace and perfection of their souls. It is a confession moved by hope (5.7), continually emphasizing God's faithfulness, perfection and mercy.

Chapters 6.8 through 26.37 begin the search for truth in and through the memory in earnest. Augustine recapitulates the motivating question, "what do I love when I love my God?" as "*quomodo ergo te quaero domine?*"; "how shall I seek you", by what means? We have observed in looking at Augustine's earlier works that memory is an appropriate avenue because it is an anthropological pointer to the meeting place of soul and body, and to the ontological boundary between the sensible and the intelligible. He could equally speak of the imagination, as he does in *mus.*, but the significance of time-consciousness becomes clear at the climactic central chapter, 27.38. Through his memory, Augustine contains, whether actually or potentially, the whole creation, including the mysteriousness of his own self. The self can then become an object for inquiry, and in turn, the depths of divine relatedness to the self.

There is clearly a pattern of ascent in this argument, but it is not one that leaves the world of sensible experience behind. This minimal conclusion is defended in our examination of the twelfth book. In the tenth book, Augustine calls into question the success of an ascensional trope at the abovementioned central chapter. He begins his search in the physical world, and these creatures respond to his "thought" with their manifest beauty, which beauty points the enquirer to their maker: "He is not here!" He rises above the faculty of sense-perception to that of memory. Through the memory, again, the sensible world exists for the mind through the sense impressions (*imagines*) that are taken in through the senses and stored in the memory (*thesauri innumerabilium imaginum*), which is also described as the "stomach" (*venter*) of the mind. Recollection is the activity of deliberately bringing forth images before the mind's eye, and it is one that the soul can improve by practice and habit (8.12). Is something truly known if the *imago* is what is known? Some scholars criticize this line of inquiry as being solipsistic.¹⁴ However, they are wrong, and we have shown that the central claim that memory is always involved in acts of judgment is Aristotelian, and a commonplace to an Augustine reasonably steeped in classical epistemology.

Augustine "pauses" with the memory, expressing wonder at the seemingly infinite capacity of memory to contain images. As we have seen before, memory is described as a power of the soul which "looks down" or outwards to the

¹⁴ Gareth Matthews makes two slight errors, first, in questioning Augustine through the lens of Descartes, and second, in thinking *mag.* to be a sufficient source for understanding how memory enables knowledge; cf. "Augustine on speaking from memory", in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R.A. Markus (Doubleday-Anchor: New York, 1972), esp. pp. 168-169. Augustine is defended by Markus in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1970), in Chapter 24. See also the valuable article by Bruce Bubacz, "Augustine's account of factual memory", in *Augustinian Studies* Vol. 6 (1975), pp. 181-192.

sensible, and “up” or inwards to the intelligible. Augustine is pleased to find that, by the memory, he can contain any variety of sensible images, beliefs and judgments, expectations and hopes, in a manner in which the will and the memory are in harmony (8.14). There is a confidence and control here. The power (*vis*) of the memory, which is a power of the mind, cannot be comprehended: but it is a false dilemma (8.15), in which Augustine observes that what is not actual, and therefore a “false” infinite, cannot be actually comprehended by the mind. The mind can contain what seems to be a potentially infinite number of discrete memories, but it is limited with respect to the discursive passage of time.

The liberal arts are contained in the memory, though not taken in through the senses.¹⁵ The same clearly applies to numbers and mathematical principles.¹⁶ Thirdly, he observes that the memory contains *perturbationes animi*, affections of the soul, without actually suffering them: he can remember *that* a certain event caused him great sadness, but he will not necessarily be subject to that same sadness. After laying out the three things contained in the memory, sensible images, things themselves, and affections or *notiones*, he observes that, though he felt he could not contain the *vis* of memory at 8.15, the memory can contain any

¹⁵ These are an example of the *res ipsae* contained in the memory; the argument is a familiar account of recollection. The liberal arts are:

1. not learned through the senses,
2. neither (therefore) learned from another,
3. therefore they are in the heart (*cor*), though not in the memory, before they are learned;
4. however, if they can be acknowledged as true, their principles must have existed in some “secret recesses” of the memory;
5. therefore, to learn these is simply to “gather” (*continebit*) what is scattered (*dispersio*).

¹⁶ See the article by J. Roland E. Ramirez, “Augustine’s Numbering Numbers”, in *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), pp. 153-161. We have already mentioned this article, in the context of the argument of *imm. an.* 3.3 (see also *mus.* 6.6.16 and *ord.* 2.14.41), in which Ramirez observes that the “numbering numbers” have a causal relationship to the sensible “numbered numbers” and in no way depend on the latter; nevertheless, he argues that these are an instance of “a temporal discovery of something eternal existing in something compatible with such an eternal existence” (p. 159).

number of relations of signification, relations of sign and thing, with the result that the memory can see itself as containing a series of fairly ordered chains of signification through which the mind can navigate at will. Memory, as Solignac observes, is contextual, and Augustine now marvels at the fact that what appears to be unknown can be brought again before the mind's eye in a more or less orderly fashion.¹⁷

17.26 marks a significant transition in the argument. While he marvels at the memory, he observes that even animals share this faculty in some measure. He knows that, in order to seek after God, he must therefore rise above and beyond (*transibo*) this faculty. But he cannot make this move: for even if God dwells above his mind, how could he seek him were he not present to his remembering? "*Quomodo ergo te, domine?*" How shall I seek you, Lord, he asks at 20.29. When men seek after God, he says, it is the *beata vita* after which they seek. If this is God, then how did this idea come into the memory? Augustine states clearly that he does not know, but is only certain that all men desire this happiness.¹⁸ He asks then whether this desire abides in the memory like a sense-image, like a scientific principle or like an affection. He concludes that it is after the manner of an affection or *perturbatio animi*. It is something in the memory

¹⁷ Clearly Augustine is talking of memory in terms of deliberate acts of recollection. As is manifest at 16.24, the mind only knows itself in the context of such discreet acts: "I know that I remember x." Memory is not for Augustine a general tendency to self-consciousness that gives rise to a simple, transcendent subjectivity. This reading is lent to Augustine by those who see in him a Neoplatonic proto-Hegelian, cf. E. Booth, "Hegel's Conception of Self-Knowledge Seen in Conjunction with Augustine's", in *Augustiniana* 30, Fasc.3-4 (1980), pp. 221-250; "St. Augustine's *notitia sui* related to Aristotle and the Early neo-Platonists", in *Augustiniana* 27 (1977), pp. 70-132 & 364-401. An antidote to this reading is the scholarship of R.D. Williams (eg. "The Paradoxes of Self-knowledge in the *De Trinitate*", *Collectanea Augustiniana. Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, J.T. Lienhard et al. (eds.) (New York, 1993), pp. 121-134) and Lewis Ayres (eg. "The Discipline of Self-knowledge in Augustine's *De trinitate* Book X", in *The Passionate Intellect*, ed. Lewis Ayres (New Brunswick and London, 1993); in this essay, Ayres indicts Charles Taylor as another proponent of this mis-reading of Augustine.).

¹⁸ Augustine says that the opening phrase of the *Hortensius* is "*omnes beati esse volunt.*" Cf. *Tusc. Disp.* 5.10.28; *conf.* 4.12.18; 6.10.17; *beata u.* 4.32; 4.34, as participation in God. See also Solignac in footnote 8, above.

such that it can be loved, even though it be not possessed: it is like the coin lost by the woman, which is lost, but not entirely lost, or else she could not seek after it.

It is in the memory, he concludes, as the memory of joy (*gaudium*) that he has experienced, however partial and fleeting. All men seek this joy and indeed experience it, in various and confused ways. If the object that gives delight, however, is not also what is true (23.33), misery then follows. To love what is both most joyful and most true, namely God, is the most certain happiness:

“amant beatam vitam, quod non est aliud quam de veritate gaudium.” Since the good of the intellect and the good of the will are ultimately one in God, what gives joy must be made subject to the truth: these alas are usually separated by man, for whom it is of greater importance to be right than true (23.34): thus, says Augustine, do men hate the truth when it condemns them. The classical argument for the universal desire for happiness offers insight concerning the relationship between God and the soul, but it is inadequate unless it is made to include God as truth personified as at its end. Through the affections, he learns of joy, but these alone do not teach him of God.

It is thus by exploring the necessary identity of the good and the true, the proper objects of the will and the intellect respectively, that Augustine comes to accept the mysterious mode of divine presence. God ineffably transcends the soul, and yet, because he makes himself knowable (24.35) he is present in the memory; he is not present however as something understood exhaustively, nor possessed wholly. The mode of his being present and the mode of our knowledge are entirely different—and yet he can only speak to the soul in a mode proper to it. This reflection allows Augustine to see God in a different manner entirely: *“et nusquam locus, et recedimus et accedimus, et nusquam locus.... Simulque*

respondes omnibus diversa consulentibus." In his despair, Augustine could not find God in any place, and where, if not in his own soul? In joy, he realizes that if God is in no place, he is able to be in every place (26.37). The truth therefore speaks to every man who calls upon it, though they may not understand or even like what they hear; the truth is one, and yet becomes many. The happy man does not seek to have his own desires confirmed by the truth, but rather to hear the truth and obey it. Submission of the will becomes Augustine's prayer, and the truth gathers many to itself in this submission.

Thus in the end, the memory does indeed contain God in some particular manner, but it is more proper to say that God contains the memory, and in doing so fills it, illumines it, and speaks to it in particular instances.¹⁹ The end point of the quest for God in the soul is the awareness of divine agency. "How shall I seek you?" Augustine asks at the opening paragraphs of this book: it is not simply by the memory, but by the illuminating and enlivening presence of God in the soul. At 40.65, when Augustine summarizes the path he has taken, he says that he learned that the *vis* of the soul was a marvel, but that it was not God; God in a different way is the power of the soul: he is the *lux permanens*, by which he "investigated all these matters to discover whether they existed, what they were, and what value should be attached to them." And though all of these things give Augustine great joy, the only place in which he is safe is the divine light itself: "there my dispersed aspirations are gathered together, and from you no part of me will depart."²⁰

¹⁹ "There will always be, given the means of grace, a temporal dislocation or anachronism between human recollection of God, and God's recollection of humanity." J. Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 195.

²⁰ "*Neque in his omnibus, quae percurro consulens te, invenio tutum locum animae meae nisi in te, quo colligantur sparsa mea nec a te quicquam recedat ex me.*"

What is good and what is true are one in God, and this gives Augustine a sense of great hope: hope that, even if his intellect and his will or affections do not function entirely in harmony, God will lead him to this place. The second half of the tenth book bears out this analysis, as Augustine examines the command that he receives to be continent. Continence is a command to live according to the truth perceived by the mind, above the mind: unity in act, by which we understand an ordering of the affections, so that what has been scattered abroad into a multiplicity may be gathered in again into one.²¹ After the pattern of 1 John 2:16, Augustine passes through the successively graver temptations that assault him: *concupiscentia carnis*, *concupiscentia oculorum*, *ambitio saeculi*. The pattern of ascent mirrors that of the treatment of memory, and yet it perverts it as Augustine describes a descent into greater darkness as the joy desired by the soul and the truth are progressively separated until the one completely obscures the other, and Augustine has replaced the truth with his self, an idol and a falsehood. Memory is of continuing but ambiguous significance here. In the first half of the book, it expresses the fact that God is at once present and absent: not precisely a paradox, but an enigma suggesting the radical difference between the soul's knowledge and the divine knowledge and presence. Here, memory preserves against Augustine's will certain habits from his former life, images and experiences that he would rather forget. At the same time, it is by means of the memory that he has a "knowledge of his good conscience" (30.41). In the language of *mus.*, Augustine desires to purge himself of *phantasmata* and yet benefit from the remembered *phantasia* of blessed joy—to live within the "bounds of memory." Augustine

²¹ 28.39. For an analysis of these magnificent central chapters, truly the center of the whole of *cōnf.* see Solignac, pp. 569-572 and the third volume of J.J. O'Donnell's commentary, *Augustine's Confessions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

wants his *delectatio* to be ordered by a higher principle. Though his memory is a vital link to the truth, nevertheless this is not adequate to heal the will, which is prone to “exceed reason” in favour of *voluptas*. Reason fails as he loses the ability to examine himself altogether; his pride destroys the very community that he seeks to build up as a religious leader; and the burden of his self, of his sin, mars the vision of divine Beauty granted to him at 27.38.

Hope is granted in the form of the *verax mediator*. There is no inadequacy about divine illumination. Augustine clearly has the text of Romans 7 before his mind’s eye. The flesh and its *voluptas* seem intractably at war with the spirit, and there is no help within Augustine for the resolution of this dilemma. In the early dialogues, Augustine frequently describes the peace of the blessed life as the product of truth being born in the soul, wisdom as the *ordo animi*, or a participation in the Beauty that makes all things beautiful.²² Here the order or unity of the soul is described as a work of *iustitia*, justice or righteousness. This is not a notion foreign to the early writings, but as in *mus.*, it is powerfully connected with the humility and self-denial which makes the incarnation of God among men possible. This divine condescension and emptying allows Augustine to see a way to the overcoming of his personal dilemma, and therefore a way to remain in the world, and in the community of the Church. The confounding humiliation of the divine acts as a “medication” to counteract the pride by which Augustine can deny truth by an act of his will. His intellect is moved; even more, in the death of this mediator, Augustine’s will is healed by participation in the same: the chance to die to his self, and live to God—to pass through the broken humanity and embrace the divine unity. Christ thus offers an external, visible

²² *Beata u.* 4.35; *ord.* 19.51.

exemplar of how this can be accomplished, as well as a practical *via* for its accomplishment.²³ By faith, and with hope, the healing work of love can begin.

At the conclusion of Book 11, Augustine writes:

See how my life is a distention (distraction) in several directions. 'Your right hand upheld me' in my Lord, *the Son of man who is mediator between you the One and us the many*, who live in a multiplicity of distractions by many things; so 'I might apprehend him in whom I also am apprehended', and leaving behind the old days I might be gathered to follow the One, 'forgetting the past' and moving not toward those future things which are transitory but to 'the things which are before' me, not stretched out in distraction but extended in reach, not by being pulled apart but by concentration.²⁴

Has the mediator truly offered a solution to Augustine's difficulties? The last three books of *conf.* are a meditation on mediation in a variety of ways. We will consider them in this light, specifically with an eye to ways in which he continues to use tropes of memory and time-anxiety as a way of expressing spiritual distance and distraction. We will show how this distance is overcome by a restoration, and not a destruction, of the memory.

These last three books are often considered an enigmatic appendix to the confession of Augustine's conversion. We will deliberately avoid offering grand schemes for answering questions about their place in the larger whole of *conf.*, instead focussing on the theological motivations for the discussion of time and eternity in the eleventh book, and the restoration of the memory of the Church in a

²³ R.D. Crouse writes: "[Because] the truth is manifested in the world in deed, it can become the object of love; and faith in that truth becomes the starting point of reason's restoration." "*In multa defluximus*: Confessions X, 29-43, and St. Augustine's theory of personality", in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*, ed. H. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus (London: Variorum, 1981), p. 183.

²⁴ 29.39 (italics mine): "...*ecce distentio est vita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum adprehendam, in quo et adprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus colligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed extensus, non secundum distentionem, sed secundum intentionem.*"

hermeneutic of Scripture in the twelfth. A continuity of purpose with the tenth book is taken for granted. We shall offer Crouse's suggestions, which are based on finding the recurring pattern of *exteriora-interiora-superiora* throughout *conf.*

Once again the pattern is complete, not now in terms of the *exteriora* of biographical event [Bks.1-9], but in a consideration of the *interiora* of the soul [the "psychology" of Bk.10]. Yet the soul is not its own principle and end; its motion is a striving *ab inferioribus* towards the *superiora* of that eternal truth which illuminates it, and the final three books of the *Confessions* are accordingly devoted to a meditation upon the eternal Word as the principium of creation, Who is the illuminator of the soul, and also speaks to the bodily senses in the words of scripture, that men should believe in Him.²⁵

Crouse observes that the climax of the argument of the tenth book is the vision of divine illumination as divine agency. The three final books consider the divine mode of being—eternity, simplicity, transcendence—but also include the psychology of the tenth book in that they seek to show how God gathers creation to himself in a unifying *conversio*. We will draw out the incarnational center of this, the manner in which the soul seeks to participate in the divine attempt to overcome the difference between the eternal and the temporal. In the early works, Augustine consistently sees memory as a power of the soul that suggests the unity of the whole person, body and soul. Participation in God, seen as a restoration of memory, or as a "holy" forgetting, cannot simply be an ascent away from the world of ordinary experience. *Exteriora* are no longer mere *exteriora* in light of the descent and death of God. By this gift, Augustine sees that all things must be preserved and gathered into one, comprehended in the mediator, "the Son of man who is mediator between you the One and us the many, who live in a multiplicity

²⁵ Cf. *conf.* 11.8.10; "Recurrere in te unum: the pattern of St. Augustine's *Confessions*", *Studia Patristica* Vol. 14 (1976), p. 391. Admittedly this is one example of such a "grand scheme", one which however has the virtue of depending upon Augustinian categories.

of distractions by many things.” Augustine demands no less than to know as all things are known in and through this mediator.

CHAPTER 8:

CONFESSIONES 11: THE “PROBLEM” OF TEMPORALITY

Scholars have generally argued that, in turning to the opening verses of Scripture as he does at 11.3.5, *conf.* hereafter takes on a new cosmic and hermeneutic purpose. We want to qualify this reading, in that the hermeneutic dimension serves a larger agenda of spiritual progress. The continuity of this book with the tenth is obvious. In the final chapter (43.70) of the tenth book, Augustine describes how he was forbidden to flee into the solitude of the desert to do battle with his sins. He asks instead that he be permitted to live in the freedom he has in Christ by “meditating on his law.” He turns therefore to Scripture as his hope while at the same time affirming Christ as the *verax mediator*, the one in whom “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” These two are not confused, but from the perspective of spiritual *formatio*, a turn to one is a turn to the other.¹

The eleventh book is continuous with this goal. He writes:

But when shall I be capable of proclaiming by ‘the tongue of my pen’ all your exhortations and all your terrors and consolations and directives, by which you brought me to preach your word and dispense your sacrament to your people? And if I have the capacity to proclaim this in an ordered narrative, yet the drops of time are too precious to me. For a long time past I have been burning to meditate in your law and confess to you what I know of it and what lies beyond my powers.... I am reluctant to expend on any other subject those hours which I find free of the necessities for restoring the body, of intellectual work, and of the service which we owe to people or that which we render to them under no obligation.²

¹ At 2.4, Moses attests to Christ (“*qui sedet ad dexteram tuam et te interpellat pro nobis, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi.*”) precisely in his writing of Genesis. It is Christ, Augustine says, that he is seeking in these books.

² 11.2.2. “*Quando autem sufficio lingua calami enuntiare monia hortamenta tua et omnes terrores tuos et consolationes et gubernationes, quibus me perduxisti praedicare verbum et sacramentum tuum dispensare populo tuo? Et si sufficio haec enuntiare ex ordine, caro mihi valent stillae temporum. Et olim inardesco meditari in lege tua et in ea tibi confiteri scientiam et inperitiam meam.... Et nolo in aliud horae diffluant, quas invenio liberas a necessitatibus reficiendi corporis*

Two things should be noted here. First, the artful anxiety about time, both the time remaining to him for his work, and the time already wasted, announces the true purpose of this book. Second, what Augustine is speaking of here is a *meditatio* that is done for its own sake. As the subsequent paragraph affirms, this desire is in harmony with his sense of obligation to the Church: to meditate upon Scripture as an activity done for its own sake is not a selfish endeavour, indeed, it subsumes any public-private dichotomy. And yet, he laments that he is drawn away from this task by the distractions of his bodily needs and ordinary duties. While Augustine sees before him what God requires of him and will grant him, there is nevertheless immediately a conflict that is the result of the ordinary conditions of embodiment.

These opening chapters are not therefore simply a preamble to 3.5: “may I hear and understand how in the beginning you made the heaven and earth.”

Augustine immediately interpolates Genesis and the opening verses of John, finding in God’s creative act the Word at work, mediating, dispersing, unifying. In this, Augustine is still chiefly concerned with the question of how the temporal can be unified with the eternal. In the first verses of Scripture he finds that this is a divine work, an act of grace, and that it is a work begun even in the first moment of creation. Why? Or better (cf. 5.7., “*quomodo*”), how? Because God does not just bring the creature into being *ex nihilo*; he does this through the Word, *in principium*. Creating, Augustine observes, is a speaking on the part of the divine.³ This tightens the parallel between Christ and Scripture, and continues precisely the questions posed in the tenth book: how is Christ an effective mediator? What

et intentionis animi et servitutis, quam debemus hominibus et quam non debemus et tamen reddimus.”

³ 6.8.

does it mean to dwell in him, to participate in him? How, by the Word, can the temporal conditions and difficulties of bodily life be brought into unity with and verily be overcome by the peace of eternity?

In its continuity with Book 10, this book is arguably not at all concerned with cosmic questions of how creation happens, and what role time plays in this. Book 11 concludes by observing that this divine speaking, as a creative activity, suggests something discursive and spread throughout time. Nevertheless it is ineffably unlike human speaking. How then does 11 positively advance the argument of *conf.*?

By considering creation specifically as *in principium*, Augustine lays out the mode of divine eternity (*aeterna ratio*), or the divine perspective on a temporal way of speaking about creation (1). Second, he introduces certain critics of the idea that God's action could have a beginning "in" time (2). Third, he talks at some length about the human perspective on time, which concludes with a rebuttal of the critics of creation (3). Finally, he concludes that memory is the key to making any sense of 3, while providing an insight into the problem of the great difference between human and divine perspectives in time (the contrast between 1 and 3). About memory, then, there is both a positive and a negative conclusion. Augustine is chiefly contrasting divine and human knowing, and posing a question: can *meditatio* be an alternative to the *distentio* that describes the distraction of bodily life? Is it really possible for mortal man to have a *sapientia*?

This is why Augustine is talking about time. Following O'Daly, we speak against a vast body of scholarship which takes the "definitional" approach, i.e. which looks at this book as an attempt on Augustine's part to understand the nature of time in creation. Such an approach assumes that a careful analysis will

give rise to a picture of Augustine's "theory of time." Amongst such readings, opinion is of course varied: is time objective or subjective, and so on.⁴ Though typically a more philosophical debate, its false categories often seep into theological research, and most scholars conclude that Augustine has a "theory" of time, in which time is defined as largely psychological, in the sense of being "subjective." One must differentiate between a basically physical theory of how time might function, and a concern with the spiritual experience of time, in order to appreciate the greater significance in the end of the latter for Augustine.

⁴ J.F. Callaghan, *Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948); also, "Basil of Caesarea: a new source for St. Augustine's theory of time", in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958), pp. 437-454; R. Gillet, "Temps et exemplarisme chez saint Augustin", in *Augustinus Magister* 2, pp. 933-941; Jules Chaix-Ruy, *Saint Augustin: Temps et Histoire* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1956); J. Guitton, *Le Temps et L'Éternité Chez Plotin et Saint Augustin* (Paris: Aubier, 1933); W. Gundersdorf von Jess, "Augustine: a consistent and unitary theory of time", in *The New Scholasticism* 46 (1972), pp. 337-351; H. Hausheer, "St. Augustine's conception of time", in *The Philosophical Review* 46 (1937), pp. 547-577; R. Jordan, "Time and contingency in St. Augustine", in Markus (1972), pp. 255-279, reprinted from *Review of Metaphysics* 8 (1954), pp. 394-417; H.M. Lacey, "Empiricism and Augustine's problems about time", in Markus (1972), pp. 280-308, reprinted from *Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1968), pp. 219-245; R.A. Markus, "Marius Victorinus and Augustine", in A.H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 327-419; J. McEvoy, "St. Augustine's account of time and Wittgenstein's criticisms", in *Review of Metaphysics* 37 (1984), pp. 547-577; E.P. Meijering, *Augustin über Schöpfung, Ewigkeit und Zeit: Das elfte Buch der Bekenntnisse* (Brill: Leiden, 1979); J.L. Morrison, "Augustine's two theories of time", in *The New Scholasticism* 45 (1971), pp. 600-610; R. Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); C.W.K. Mundle, "Augustine's pervasive error concerning time", in *Philosophy* 41 (1966), pp. 165-168; R.J. O'Connell, "The Riddle of Augustine's Confessions: a Plotinian key", in *International Philosophical Quarterly* (1964), pp. 327-352; D.L. Ross, "Time, the heaven of heavens, and memory in Augustine's *Confessions*", in *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991), pp. 191-205; G.J.P. O'Daly, "Augustine on the measurement of time: some comparisons with Aristotelian and Stoic texts", in H.J. Blumenthal and R.A. Markus, eds., *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought* (London: Variorum, 1981), pp. 171-179; *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); "Time as *distentio* and St. Augustine's exegesis of Philippians 3:12-14", in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 23 (1977), pp. 265-271; R.J. Teske, "The world-soul and time in St. Augustine", in *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983), pp. 75-92; see also an unpublished M.A. dissertation by Philip Corkum, *Et Mirum si Non Ipsius Animi: On Augustine, Confessions, Book XI* (Halifax, Dalhousie University, 1994), in which a great deal of classic scholarship is exhaustively engaged. In most cases, the titles of these articles and monographs tell of their approach and usefulness. We tend to be sympathetic with the French scholars, of course including Solignac and Le Blond, as well as O'Daly, who is the only one to note that the chief historical originality and therefore significance of the eleventh book lies in Augustine's insistence "on the indispensable function of memory in all time calculation." We move beyond O'Daly only in a difference of method; we seek to ask questions about memory and time measurement in a manner that intends chiefly to illuminate the argument of Book 11.

Augustine's argument is framed by appeals to Christ, the Word through and in whom the enquiry is made. At 22.28, Chadwick suggests that Augustine does this mainly to "forestall critics" who will see his project as primarily philosophical, i.e. Neoplatonic, in character.⁵ The appeal has a more subtle and relevant intent. We have already observed the initial interpolation of Christ and Scripture. In the prayer at 2.4, images of creation and salvation are mingled in the person of Christ. Of course, salvation for Augustine involves Christ's union with humanity, with the physical and psychical, while creation does not.⁶ But the ability of the divine to, as it were, contradict itself, to enter into the human and bring it into union with itself, is precisely the promise of the argument here. Augustine sees this union as something intended and already being accomplished in the uniquely trinitarian mode of creation described in Scripture.

I make my prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, 'the man of your right hand, the Son of man whom you have strengthened' to be mediator between yourself and us. By him you sought us when we were not seeking you. But you sought us that we should seek you, your Word by whom you made all things including myself, your only Son by whom you have called to adoption the people who believe, myself among them. I make my prayer to you through him 'who sits at your right hand and intercedes to you for us.' 'In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' For those treasures I search in your books. Moses wrote of him (John 5:46). He himself said this; this is the declaration of the Truth.⁷

⁵ Chadwick, p. 236.

⁶ Contrast for example the Neoplatonic Augustinian Eriugena: in his *Periphyseon*, he does not collapse Incarnation and creation, but this interpretive possibility always looms large given the continuity of the movement of divine *exitus-reditus*.

⁷ "Obsecro per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum filium tuum, virum dexteræ tuæ, filium hominis, quem confirmasti tibi mediatorem tuum et nostrum, per quem nos quaesisti non quaerentes te, quaesisti autem, ut quaereremus te, verbum tuum, per quod fecisti omnia, in quibus et me, unicum tuum, per quem vocasti in adoptionem populum credentium in quo et me: per eum te obsecro, qui sedet ad dexteram tuam et te interpellat pro nobis, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiæ et scientiæ absconditi. Ipsos quaero in libris tuis. Moyses de illo scripsit: hoc ipse ait, hoc veritas ait." The idea of the treasures of wisdom being hidden in Christ echoes a passage at 2.3 where Augustine describes the pages of Scripture as "secret recesses", deliberately intended to be difficult and obscure so that they may be dark forests in which "deer recover their strength... and restore themselves by walking and feeding, by resting and ruminating." This image of Christ the Word as full of unfathomed depths is essential to the transition to the twelfth book in which we consider how Scripture unifies.

Augustine seeks to listen to the divine Word in Scripture, yet is unsure about the nature of the divine mode of speaking. For this reason, Augustine seeks insight into the divine perspective on time or the creature in general.⁸ As at *conf.* 10.6.8, creation cries out (*clamant*) to the mind of the one perceiving that it is, first, other than God, and second, that in being made (*factum*), it is changing (*mutari*).⁹ God creates by speaking, that is, by speaking his Word. The difficulty is apparent. The Word that God speaks is eternal, and is spoken “everlastingly” (*dicitur sempiternae*).¹⁰ Of necessity, the Word is involved in a beginning in time, since the creature is mutable and as such is dependent on the unchanging for its being and coming-into-being. For Augustine, ontological dependency is a basic metaphysical tenet, taken for granted throughout his early writings. This highlights the difficulty in talk about creation: if God creates in speaking everlastingly, he does not speak as humans do, with memory containing and expecting what has passed away and what is yet to come. Everything is made “at once” in this mode of speaking. And yet the language introduces concepts of alterity in the divine, as well as succession. So how does the eternal cause the temporal? How can there be a “when” in the eternal thinking (*aeterna ratio*), and a beginning in its action?

Augustine appeals to revelation. The *verbum* is also the beginning, i.e. the beginning of time; we know this, he says, because the Word itself says it, “in

⁸ This book is commonly divided into two parts, chapters 1 through 13, and 14 through 31. The problem with this artificial division lies in the fact that a great deal of energy is thereafter expended in an attempt to reconcile the two “parts.” If we seem to repeat these divisions, their artificiality must be conceded. We do this for the sake of convenience, but in the end assume the unity of the argument.

⁹ 11.4.6.

¹⁰ 11.7.9.

the flesh”, in Scripture.¹¹ Through the “flesh” of Scripture, the “Truth” itself teaches, speaking to the ears of men so that they may be granted *sapientia*, by being brought to the very *aeterna veritas*. Compare this to *mag.*: if one is being taught truthfully, the changeable can be something through which one is lead back to the unchangeable truth. Clearly this refers to the words of Scripture. However, it also refers to the words, the speech, of the creature in its coming-to-be.

Creation is a speaking *to* the creature. That it is a work of the Trinity does not mean that it is a mere necessary by-product of a necessary internal relation. It is a calling, and then a recalling. At 9.11, revelation *in general* is described as “striking at the heart”, as something that enflames Augustine because it is at once so “unlike him” and yet so akin. As at 10.27.38, where God violently breaks through Augustine’s deafness, and overcomes his blindness with the divine light, here *sapientia* is described as a gift given from above: creation and wisdom are inextricably linked in the divine purpose in Christ. He concludes therefore that the divine mode of creating, of speaking, is true because revealed as such, but that it can only be understood as miraculous: “*miro modo dicens et miro modo faciens.*”¹²

This is only a temporary conclusion. The next stage in the argument comes from the critics of the idea of a *principium*: these may be Manichees, or various representatives of Platonic teachings. Either way, these critics make the mistake of judging the difficulty in speaking about creation by the model of

¹¹ 11.8.10. “*Quando debuisse incipere vel desinere in aeterna ratione cognoscitur, ubi nec incipit aliquid nec desinit. Ipsum est verbum tuum, quod et principium est, quia et loquitur nobis. Sic in evangelio per carnem ait, et hoc insonuit foris auribus hominum, ut crederetur et intus quaereretur, et inveniretur in aeterna veritate, ubi omnes discipulos bonus et solus magister docet.*”

¹² 11.9.11.

human reasoning and the limitations of human language.¹³ Augustine is clearly also concerned with the difficulty of speaking of a divine *sapientia* being granted to a mutable creature. In brief, the critics assume that God is subject to the linguistic categories of time much as the creature is: “their heart flickers hitherto between notions of things past and to come.”¹⁴ Thus they ask questions such as “what was God doing *before* creation?” To these Augustine replies, saying that before creation there was no before, since there was no time before creation. Before God made, he did not make anything.¹⁵ God’s “today”, says Augustine, is eternity; there is no succession in his speaking; his time “does not pass” but rather “stands” (*stant*).¹⁶

The answer, at 14.17, is that time is a creature. Time, as Augustine says later in this book, is such an obvious and intimate aspect of everyday life, and yet its passage marks a very mysterious truth about creatureliness. What is time? The *rhetorical* question is at last posed: *quid est enim tempus*? This suggests that we have finally come upon the motivating issue of the text, but this is clearly not a complete movement in the argument. Augustine distinguishes between time and the measurement of time, but the remainder of the book only considers various problems about the latter. The critics of the Catholic position are not able to imagine a way to think about time measurement in a non-creaturely way, and the remainder of the book considers whether and how Augustine might through the

¹³ O'Donnell suggests, comparing this passage to *Gn. adv. Man.*, that the obvious critics are Manichees; Solignac adds Neoplatonists to these (cf. pp. 581-582); Chadwick (p. 227) argues that Augustine is speaking against unsophisticated Catholics.

¹⁴ 11.11.13.

¹⁵ 11.12.14.

¹⁶ 11.13.15.

physical creature come to some understanding, some *sapientia*, with respect to the divine perspective (the *aeterna ratio*) of temporal succession.

Nevertheless, at 14.17 we come as close as ever to a “definition” of time in this book.

Take the two tenses, past and future. How can they ‘be’ when the past is not now present and the future is not yet present? Yet if the present were always present, it would not pass into the past: it would not be time but eternity. If then, in order to be time at all, the present is so made that it passes into the past, how can we say that this present also ‘is’? The cause of its being is that it will cease to be. So indeed we cannot truly say that time exists except in the sense that it tends towards non-existence.¹⁷

The being of time is precisely that it *tendit non esse*. However, this is a description, not a definition.¹⁸ It is the experience of the one who is alive to the passage of time, to the fleeting character of the present. Augustine is clear that there is an “objective” reality to time; but there seems to be discord between its existence and our experience. For the former, only the present exists; for the latter, the present is meaningless, except as the remembered past.¹⁹

Subsequent chapters appear to be concerned with the “subjective” experience of time. While acknowledging that there can be a scientific measurement of time, one’s state of mind lends very different characteristics to the passage of time. A period of time may seem to pass more slowly or more quickly in a variety of circumstances. Measurement then does not offer a sufficient explanation for the experience of the passage of time. The solution of memory is alluded to at 17.22: things that are past and future in some sense do not

¹⁷ “*Duo ergo illa tempora, praeteritum et futurum, quomodo sunt, quando et praeteritum iam non est et futurum nondum est? Praesens autem si semper esset praesens nec in praeteritum transiret, non iam esset tempus, sed aeternitas. Si ergo praesens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praeteritum transit, quomodo et hoc esse dicimus, cui causa, ut sit, illa est, quia non erit, ut scilicet non vera dicamus tempus esse, nisi quia tendit non esse?*”

¹⁸ O’Daly (1981), p.173.

¹⁹ On the fleeting present, see O’Daly (1981), p. 172.

exist since they are not present, and yet they are knowable, by recollection and expectation based on “signs or causes” of what is to come.²⁰ Augustine concludes that, because there is a kind of knowledge, there is a presence, even of what is strictly speaking not “present.” Intellectual presence is not restricted by physical presence. Thus when grammarians speak of three tenses, past, present and future, they speak loosely (“*nec proprie dicitur*”) of what are in fact three modes of presence “in the soul” (“*in anima*”).

The continuity provided by memory is essential for knowledge, and yet it also paints a misleading picture. Grammarians speak as though the three major tenses are states of equal reality; by this Augustine alludes to the misconception of those who criticize the idea of a *principium*. For creatures, a certain appearance of continuity, or extension, is necessary in order for time to be measured, and this extension is clearly a function of memory. An analogy emerges between divine and human knowing, but it begins immediately to fail, because for God there no past or future, neither is there an “extended present” as there is for man. The extension of the present preserves what is from becoming what-is-not in a discursive perspective. Here Augustine ventures his most misleading rhetorical question. Is time this very extension? “*Video igitur quandam esse distentionem. Sed video? An videre mihi videor?*” The use of the verb *videre* distances the speaker, delays a commitment: “I see that time is some sort of stretching; do I see this? Or does it seem to me that I see this?”²¹ While he can observe the

²⁰ 11.18.24.

²¹ As a definition, this idea is rejected by the biblical example provided in chapter 23.30, when God makes the sun stand still until a battle runs its course. What does the motion of physical bodies which mark the passage of time have to do with our experience of time? Nothing, according to O’Daly (1981), p. 175. “Whatever the precise relation of the unit *dies* may be to solar movement, the equation of time with movement by the *homo doctus* fails to distinguish between time *qua* measurable duration or change and time *qua* time unit.”

movement of the bodies which mark the passage of time, Augustine cannot seem to identify what he means by time itself: "I measure what I do not know", he says.²²

At 26.33, he is very careful to clarify his position: indeed, to the perceiving subject, time seems like a stretching out, a making-continuous of the present moment and therefore of the perceiving mind itself. But what this might mean, Augustine says, is something marvelous to him: "*inde mihi visum est nihil esse aliud tempus quam distentionem: sed cuius rei, nescio, et mirum, si non ipsius animi.*" To say that the measurement of time, or even the existential apprehension of the passage of time, is a function of the mind is hardly radical or historically novel. What is remarkable about this observation? Augustine has clarified the sense in which past and future do not actually exist, and he reminds himself again at 27.34 that the present itself "does not stand", but is fleeting and without *real* extension. It is therefore a work of memory to perceive and "fix" in the mind a thing: "*sed aliquid in memoria mea metior, quod infixum manet.*" What is known and really present to the mind is what is past. Memory provides a stable ground for the mind's knowledge of creation, since it mediates what needs to be ready at hand to the mind. Something is comprehensible because it has been comprehended. Looking back to the model of dialectic in *ord.*, the trope of synthesis here predominates.²³ Memory allows the mind to judge by unifying, since it can contain a distinct beginning and end.²⁴

²² 11.26.33.

²³ In this sense alone is time measured in the mind; cf. 27.36: "*in te, anime meus, tempora mea metior.*" This is not "subjectivist"; if anything, it demonstrates that knowledge for Augustine is not idealist and abstract. This also speaks against Chadwick's comparison of Augustine and Plotinus (p. 242) to the effect that time simply "doesn't exist outside the soul." Rather, Augustine's intentions here are exposed as chiefly epistemological and spiritual.

²⁴ 11.28.37. Thus a period of time seems to be long because it *now* seems to be long, though it be entirely expired.

Augustine tells himself that time is either the present measurement of a past thing, or else he is not actually measuring time at all. Both of these seem true: we have observed how he distinguishes between time as such and its measurement. But he is speaking of the latter as more than a psychological event. Memory makes the experience of the discursive intelligible; temporal experience, otherwise, is a flux, an undifferentiated mess. On the other hand, memory gives rise to a falsehood necessary for *scientia*. It lends the present a sense of permanence that it does not in fact possess, and there is a cost for this necessary misapprehension, both spiritual and intellectual. Augustine sees that memory cannot offer him the *sapientia* that he seeks, the *meditatio* so like the peace of divine wisdom. It grants only a limited stability, in which the present is constantly slipping away. "See how my life is a distraction (*distentio*) in several directions!" At this essential moment, Augustine appeals again to the Mediator, by whom he would (a) come to know, or approach, the God "who is One"; (b) be himself gathered into unity, preserved from the "old things" in a holy "forgetting"; and (c) be no longer distracted, but instead "extended through time" as one who is "attentive" ("*secundum attentionem*") to what is "before."²⁵

Several things are going on in this chapter. Augustine expresses his desire to know God as a work of grace, by which he is gathered into the unity of Christ (*in quo et adprehensus sum*), the Word through whom the creation of many things (*multa*) is effected in a unified and simple manner. The mysterious juncture of the Word in creation, the "*mirus*" of the *principium*, is the hope and the means of the

²⁵ 11.29.39. "*Sed quoniam melior est misericordia tua super vitas, ecce distentio est vita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa, ut per eum adprehendam, in quo et adprehensus sum, et a veteribus diebus colligar sequens unum, praeterita oblitus, non in ea quae futura et transitura sunt, sed in ea quae ante sunt non distentus, sed extentus, non secundum distentionem, sed secundum intentionem sequor ad palmam supernae vocationis, ubi audiam vocem laudis et contempler delectationem tuam nec venientem nec preatereuntem.*"

divine gathering-into-unity. This gathering is described as a translation from the old to the new, indeed as a transformation from memory as a mode of being that holds together the fragmentation of temporal existence into memory as a perspective that is still discursive, but somehow whole, continuous and focused. Clearly Augustine wants to find in the notion of “forgetting” a transcendence that images the *aeterna ratio*—the divine perspective on time described in the earlier chapters of the book. A transformation of memory is thus at the heart of the idea of spiritual attentiveness as a way to be *in time yet not subject to time*, and as such memory takes on a richly metaphorical dimension. The “before” to which Augustine refers might be the “ontological before” to which the critics pose the ill-conceived question: “what was God doing before he created?” As such, this would be a non-temporal priority that Augustine is seeking, a priority of causality: the *aeterna ratio* itself in act. There is also a dimension of final causality, or eschatology properly speaking: “forgetting the past and moving not towards those future things which are transitory but to the ‘things which are before me’.... So I ‘pursue the prize of the high calling’ where I ‘may hear the voice of praise’ and ‘contemplate your delight’.” Having acknowledged this reality, he then retreats:

But now my years pass in groans and you, Lord, are my consolation. You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand. The storm of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together and merge into you.²⁶

Memory cannot provide a way to overcome the conditions of the temporal: it is anthropological fact, and spiritual dilemma. By memory, the temporal becomes intelligible, and possibly the foundation for a *scientia*. But it also signifies what is

²⁶ 11.29.39. “*Nunc vero anni mei in gemitibus, et tu solacium meum, domine, pater meus aeternus es; at ego in tempora dissilui, quorum ordinem nescio, et tumultuosis varietatibus dilaniantur cogitationes meae, intima viscera animae meae, donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui.*”

for Augustine the tragedy of the temporal: the sense of loss, the frustration of distance, the dramatic unlikeness of the human and divine perspectives of creation. This is the negative conclusion to this book, as confirmed in the final chapter (31.41), in which Augustine describes the manner in which he remembers and recites a psalm. When he does this, he knows the whole psalm in his memory, even though his recitation passes through each verse successively. Does God know time in this manner? No; God knows in a better and more mysterious manner, “before” all times: “*longe mirabilis, longeque secretius.*” The comparison fails; there can be no *scientia* of the eternal. We unify by memory, but we experience this unity in a limited manner as a “stretching out”: we are therefore distracted, experiencing the uncertainty of a variety of affections (*perturbationes animi*), mind inconstant in the desire to attend to what is. Memory is necessary, but it declares the mind’s inability to understand (*adprehendere*) how God could create *sine varietate notitiae*. And so Augustine concludes by praying that God will “heal his eyes” and remove the “consequences of his sin.”

Is this largely negative conclusion unexpected? Have we advanced beyond the conclusion of the tenth book, in which Christ was offered as a promise of mediation, a means of spiritual union and personal integration? This book also concludes with the promise of mediation—a necessary humility, the affirmation that God dwells in the lowly: “you lift up those who are cast down, and those whom you raise... cannot fall down.” The difference between divine and human with which the book concludes clearly has a propaedeutic dimension. The critics of the Catholic understanding of creation fail in precisely in that they judge the action of the divine by the categories of human knowing. Augustine is clearly

writing for the Church, and his critics need the preparation of humility even more dramatically than Augustine himself. But is the promised reward only eschatological? Will Augustine “stand and find stability and solidity” in the truth and in his own person only at the end of his days?²⁷ When will truth, unity, order, be made incarnate in his own soul and body?

There is however a veritable analogy between memory as the experience of *distentio*, and the divine eternity. Though it seems contrary to Augustine’s purposes, it is essential to the argument.²⁸ Nevertheless, Augustine leaves the reader with the humbling impression of the unlikeness of the human and the divine. Is the argument concerning memory merely negative, as O’Daly argues? The twelfth book begins to show how God gathers what is many into one. The hope for this is found in the eleventh book not only in the necessary preparation of humility, but in the fact that God creates *in principium*, in his Word—through which Word, in person and in Scripture, he seeks to bring man back to him again. A resolution to the spiritual problem posed by memory is available, and it is far from abstract. It is summed up in the Word as scripture, in its ability to form the *anima* through *meditatio*, and in its sacramental presence to the community of the Church. Because of this, *distentio* need not be simply a ruthless distraction, but rather can become an “attention” (*intentio*). This must be achieved precisely through the *meditatio* that Augustine expresses his desire for, both at the conclusion of the tenth book, and at the opening of the eleventh book. A real, albeit limited, union of the temporal and eternal is thus promised through an

²⁷ 11.30.40. “*Et stabo atque solidabor in te, in forma mea, veritate tua.*” Note how human “form” and divine “truth” are parallel in this construction; their identification is what is promised by God’s “stability.”

²⁸ Cf. Sorabji (1983), p. 30, who identifies an apparent confusion of purpose at the conclusion to this book.

understanding of the mechanism of memory. The twelfth book looks to the renovation of memory as *intentio* as a way to engage the *via* of the incarnate mediator.

CHAPTER 9:
CONFESSIONES 12 and 13: TIME, MATTER,
AND A *SCIENTIA* OF SCRIPTURE

The final two books of *conf.* are rich and thematically complex. Our intention is to consider only those facets which contribute to the argument that these books do indeed provide a coherent answer to the promise of mediation offered at the conclusion of the tenth book. These books are not directly about memory as are the tenth and eleventh. However, we have argued that the discussion of eternity and temporality in the eleventh book extends to the cosmic level the way in which memory describes the likeness and unlikeness of the creature to God: the ability of the judging mind to contain what is passing in time before the mind's eye as a memory of what is past; and the almost tragic sense in which the thing desired by the mind has, in itself, already passed into non-being. Augustine offers in the eleventh book the possibility of an analogy between human and divine knowing, but concludes with a sharp reminder of radical difference. The question concerning memory thus becomes: how can man, who is discursive in his way of knowing, be brought into unity with the divine in its simplicity? Of course, this is not exclusively a question concerning memory, nor do we mean to reduce it to the same.

A number of scholars, O'Donnell among them, find in the final three books of *conf.* a trinitarian pattern by which each book corresponds in some way with each person of the Trinity in turn. These schemes are helpful, but often do not explain as much as they hope to. In an obvious sense, the final book certainly brings out the distinctive role of the Holy Spirit in the act of creation. We want to

show that a certain internal logic motivates the progressive revelation of the distinct persons of the Trinity, and that the conclusion to the argument of *conf.* is not the Holy Spirit as such, but rather the vision of God, the Trinity entire, as something that is perfectly one, and yet by nature able to embrace “distinction.” It is this promise that is glimpsed only inchoately in the *verax mediator* of the conclusion of the tenth book.

These books are also, of course, about Scripture. Some readers find the extended hermeneutic discussion in the twelfth book to be an artful but awkward imposition on the central discussion of formless matter and the *caelum caeli*. The two purposes, however, come together. Augustine is putting his own hermeneutic into action, and thereby offering it as a model for what the confessional *meditatio* of the Christian community might look like. We are offered a picture of the Church in which men on earth are constituted, albeit in a limited manner, in a membership in the *caelum caeli*, the city of God. The trinitarian work of *formatio* in creation is seen to parallel the work of *reformatio* of souls in the life of the Church. In Augustine’s own *meditatio*, we see the “distraction” of memory become the “attention” of sure affection, and his own mind, once a narrative of recollected past events, translated hopefully into the “intentional” memory of the Church.

The desire for union with the Father is thus no longer simply a matter of anthropology or epistemology. Augustine’s hermeneutic attempts to overcome a conventional barrier between the private and the public. Unity is now a matter of ecclesiology. The embracing of a new paradigm is the condition for the vision of the Trinity in the thirteenth book.

We will proceed in four short sections intended to bring out the movement of resolution in the argument. Again, this is not an exhaustive, scientific commentary of these texts: this would be impossible in such a short space.¹ These sections will consider Augustine's discussion of formless matter, the heaven of heavens, the metaphorical dimension of Scripture, and finally the Trinity as it brings to completion the work of conversion and union with God.

I. Unlikeness: formless matter

The continuity of content between the eleventh and twelfth books is the continuity between the concepts of time and matter. This is best summed up by Solignac (p. 600):

Bref, pour Augustin, la matière—tout comme le temps dont l'être est tendance à ne pas être (11.14.17)—est une réalité paradoxale, nous dirions aujourd'hui *dialectique*; ni négation pure, ni réalité définie, mais *négativité dynamique*. En tant que *négativité*, elle dit absence totale de forme, informité absolue; en tant que *négativité dynamique*, elle est le principe de la mutabilité, la mutabilité même et la capacité de recevoir les formes. Ces deux aspects apparaissent clairement dans les deux formules que suggère Augustin: en tant que *négativité*, elle est *nihil*; en tant que *dynamique*, elle est *aliquid*; en tant que *dynamique*, elle *est*; en tant que *négativité*, elle *n'est pas*. C'est ce que Plotin exprimait en une autre formulation: "elle est déjà selon qu'elle est à venir, mais son être est seulement cet *à-venir* annoncé" (*Enn.* 2.5.5).

¹ On the last two books of *conf.*, there is a variety of literature, mostly thematic. Of a more textual nature, see F. Cayré's article, "Le livre XIII des *Confessions*", in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 2 (1956), pp. 143-161; A. Solignac, *In Principio* (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1973), especially "Exégèse et métaphysique *Genèse* I, 1-3 chez saint Augustin", pp. 153-171; L. Pera, *La creazione simultanea e virtuale secondo S. Agostino* (Biblioteca Augustiniana: Florence, 1934); G. Haendler, "Der Schöpfungsgedanke in den *Konfessionen* Augustins", in *Beiträge zur Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (W. Pieck Universität: Rostock, 1976), pp. 33-41; E. Katayanagi, "Conversio in creatione", in *Studies in Medieval Thought* 25 (1983), pp. 59-79; C. Boyer, "Éternité et création dans les trois derniers livres des *Confessions*", in *Giornale di Metafisica* 9 (1954), pp. 441-448. The best monograph on the themes of these books is that of Marie-Anne Vannier, *Creatio, conversio, formatio, chez S. Augustin* (Éditions Universitaires: Fribourg, 1991); by her own account, she is deeply influenced by the work of G. Madec (especially relevant here is *La Patrie et la Voie* (Desclée de Brouwer: Paris, 1989)).

The importance of creation *ex nihilo* for Augustine cannot be overstated.² On the side of the creator, it emphasizes God's graciousness in his work: that he is bound by no necessity, but rather is moved by an abundance of goodness. Omnipotence is demonstrated in the fact that nothing is required for the work of creation outside of the divine nature. On the side of the creature, there is a radical sense of dependency on the efficient and formal causality of God. This much can be taken for granted as Catholic orthodoxy on the topic of creation for Augustine's audience.

Augustine defends the idea of a formless matter out of which things are made for several reasons. At the very least, he thinks it is scriptural. While he clearly means to make sense of his philosophical heritage, there is no manifest anxiety about forcing Neoplatonic ideas into a Christian framework: his work here is not original in its basics, nor do we find him compromising his orthodoxy for the sake of concessions, say, to Plotinus.³ To be sure, formless matter is created by God. If Augustine clearly maintains that God is the origin of the whole creation, why introduce seemingly needless distinctions? For our own limited purposes, the significance of formless matter, comparable to the primordial "chaos" of *Timaeus*, lies in the fact that a fundamental negativity underpins every creaturely work. This is the negativity, the non-being, that Augustine experiences as an embodied creature within time in the eleventh book. The negativity of

² The literature on this subject is vast; see the bibliography in Vannier. On creation *ex nihilo* specifically, see H.A. Wolfson, "The meaning of *ex nihilo* in the Church fathers, Arabic and Hebrew philosophy and S. Thomas", in *Medieval Studies in Honour of J.D.M. Ford* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1948), pp. 355-370; G. May, *Schöpfung aus dem Nichts (Die Entstehung der Lehre von der creatio ex nihilo)* (W. de Gruyter: Berlin, 1978); G. Pelland, *Cinq études d'Augustin sur le début de la Genèse* (Bellarmin: Montreal, 1972); W.A. Christian, "Augustine on the creation of the world", in *The Harvard Theological Review* 46 (1953), pp. 1-25.

³ On matter in general, see the writings of Kevin Corrigan (1996) and A.H. Armstrong, especially the latter in "Spiritual or intelligible matter in Plotinus and S. Augustine", in *Augustinus Magister* 1 (1954), pp. 277-283.

time's passage therefore expresses the otherness, or unlikeness, of the creature in terms of a language that is more "spatial" than temporal: formless matter is described as "far off" from God, because it is "unlike" God.⁴ It introduces a further aspect to the sense of radical dependency of the creature upon the Creator, because apart from formal causality (associated most often with the Word), the creature is essentially next-to-nothing. The creature is constituted by a combination of an active and a passive element, both of which are traced to divine causality.

Augustine's *informitas* is different from Aristotle's *hypokeimenon*, but does sound remarkably like his understanding of matter as potency, i.e. as something that does not exist in reality, but only as an intellectual principle. And Augustine does mean to explain it as a principle for thought merely: there is no passage of time between the creation of formless matter and the informing of matter by the work of the Trinity. They are in effect distinct only in principle. There can be no substance in nature without form. Although described as "matter", formless matter is non-physical as such⁵, not sensible and therefore not really knowable⁶; it is a principle of "distance from God" compared to the absence of sound or light⁷, and yet not entirely nothing, because it is "something between form and nothing" (*inter formam et nihil*).⁸

The key image is the "distance" or unlikeness, which subsequently underlies all creation even though it is informed by the Word as the principle of order in creation. Augustine describes a scale of being; every creature inhabits a

⁴ 12.7.7.

⁵ 12.3.3.

⁶ 12.5.5.

⁷ 12.8.8.

⁸ 12.6.6.

fixed place on this scale, whether closer to “nothingness” at its base, or closer to God at its summit.⁹ To be closer to God is to be more like him in nature; but everything, even the heaven of heavens, that first, purely intellectual creature, admits of some measure of the *informitas* which is the abiding “variableness” of what is other than God.

Only later does Augustine say that formless matter should not be discussed apart from the explicit creative roles of the persons of the Trinity. Why then begin an account of creation in this way here? Because the account of creation offered here is not merely a metaphor for the soul’s journey from the darkness of sin to the light of heavenly presence; it is actually the story of the conversion of the soul as a coming-into-being, a realization of its nature, of its intended *species*. The soul begins in a place of unlikeness, and comes to a region of light. It is not the case that the soul occupies a fluid place on the scale of being. Rather, it has not yet attained the fulfillment of its intended form.

II. Likeness: the heaven of heavens

The *caelum caeli* is described as a “certain intellectual creature” (“*aliqua creatura intellectualis*”), and the created wisdom of God (“*sapientia*”); it is not co-eternal with God, but partakes of eternity by a participation by contemplation. It possesses the variability of every other creature, yet at the same time, by “inhering” in God, it rises above the mutability of time, indeed, rising above its own nature: “*particeps tamen aeternitatis tuae, valde mutabilitatem suam prae dulcedine felicissimae contemplationis tuae cohibet, et sine ullo lapsu, ex quo*

⁹ 12.7.7.

facta est, inhaerendo tibi, excedit omnem volubilem vicissitudinem temporum.”¹⁰

This heaven is created in time, but also in a special way before time since, from the first moment of its existence, it “cleaves” to God in an act of adoration.

It is by grace then that the heaven of heavens enjoys its stability; it is not something possessed by nature. A fundamental variability remains. The “chaos” too was created before time, but it is considered to be extra-temporal by virtue of an absence of “figure or order.” Once the special status of the heaven of heavens is introduced in the twelfth book (10.10), Augustine prays for the gift of illumination: the timing of this prayer is deliberate. The heaven of heavens seems to promise exactly what Augustine is seeking, namely, a state of contemplation whereby the natural conditions of knowledge are at once fulfilled and overcome. But how is this possible? He does not yet see a way, and so he describes himself as torn between darkness and light. In the form and beauty of material things, he has come to see the hand of a divine creator, and “remember Him”; even mutable, material things can hold together the negativity of creaturely existence with the beauty of form. At times, Augustine has blamed intellectual errors about the nature of material things for holding him back from God: it is clear that intellectual errors are conditional upon the prior issue of the disorder of the will. Augustine sees himself as standing always at the brink of a pit of darkness into which he would descend by reason of the deficient causality of his errant will.¹¹ He is the “cause” of the difficulty of his own spiritual state.

¹⁰ 12.9.9. This passage suggests that, although Augustine does not go into any detail here about the fall of the angels and the founding of the two “cities”, he has nevertheless worked through this matter in his own mind. Note also that, in addition to the term “*inhaerendo*” Augustine favours the term “*cohaerendo*” to describe how the creature “clings” to God.

¹¹ Again, it is in *ciu.*, 12.1.1, ff., that Augustine describes in greater detail the idea of sinful choice as a form of deficient causality.

How then, he asks, can the heaven of heavens accept its natural distinctness from God and yet peacefully enjoy such an intimacy? Chapters 11.11 through 13.16 consider this matter, and conclude with a transition to a defense of Augustine's hermeneutic of Scripture. Augustine is also here arguing for the scriptural basis and congruity of the idea of a heaven of heavens as a first creature, though its creation is not explicitly mentioned in the first verses of Genesis.

The essential point is that the heaven of heavens, or the creatures which inhabit this dwelling, do not lose their natural "mutability", but with their whole heart, their whole affection ("*in affectu toto*"), are filled with God. God alone is immortal, and therefore has an immortal and immutable will. This is not the case for the heaven of heavens: its will is "fixed" by grace, not by nature, and by this same grace it "keeps itself", or "is contained" ("*se tenet*"). Thus, "having neither anything in the future to expect, nor conveying anything it remembers into the past, it is neither altered by any change, nor distracted by any times."¹² The heaven of heavens does not share the divine perspective on time, i.e. eternity in the fullest sense of possessing an immutable will. Rather it possesses a *satisfied will*, because its will is filled with the God who is everywhere present and at work. In this scenario, memory is not destroyed, but restfully focused on what is "present" to it. The natural variability of discursive knowledge remains, but its negativity is purged of the possibility of distraction, anxiety and a sensed incompleteness. This is what Augustine desires in his *meditatio*, and what he did not yet see as a possibility in the eleventh book: a will at peace. Augustine wants to share in the attributes of the *caelum caeli*: he wants to effectively rise above the limitations of his nature by being fixed *in affectu*. Must the visitation of God's

¹² 12.11.12. "*Non habens futurum quod expectet nec in praeteritum traiciens quod meminerit, nulla vice variatur nec in tempora ulla distenditur.*"

domus await the life that is entirely free of the negative aspects of embodied life? The only way for Augustine to hope that his *meditatio* might bring a measure of peace to his will is by submission of his self to the life of God that is already at work in him. He has said as much before, but there is a new and practical dimension that will serve the realization of this project: the community of the Church.

III. Scripture as a metaphor of the Church

In these books, Augustine presents what he sees as a novel paradigm of truth. In this, he submits an epistemic scheme to the fully theological conception of *veritas* familiar from the tenth book of *conf.* We turn to a contemporary Augustinian as an example and quasi-elucidation of this paradigm. Hans-Georg Gadamer, writing in *Wahrheit und Methode*, describes a manner in which truth can be seen as fundamentally communal, without being historicist or relativistic in nature.¹³ From a rich wellspring of ancient Stoic and modern German sources, mixed with Vico and an authentically Augustinian conception of memory, Gadamer challenges Hegel's project as one that intends a "complete mastery of substance."¹⁴ Gadamer is mainly concerned with the epistemological consequences of such a project. In looking for a "new", post-Enlightenment picture of rationality, Gadamer abstracts the fundamentally historical nature of consciousness from Hegel, and attempts to marry it with the "*sensus communis*"

¹³ First published in 1960; trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (Continuum: New York, 1995).

¹⁴ That is, the project of tracing the necessary, progressivist and historical emergence of the Idea, and conveniently finding its final fruition in the writings of Hegel himself; cf. *Truth and Method*, p. 15. Note that on p. 16, Gadamer writes: "It is time to rescue the phenomenon of memory from being regarded merely as a psychological faculty and to see it as an essential element of the finite historical being of man."

of Vico.¹⁵ By this account, knowledge is possible only by virtue of the shared “prejudice” (in the etymologically strict sense), the shared language, of a given community. Rationality presupposes a tradition, or a culture (*Bildung*); it is in this idea of historical culture that Gadamer locates a basic openness to what is “other” and more truly universal.

It embraces a sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence consists in rising above itself to universality. To distance oneself from oneself and from one’s private purposes means to look at these in the way that others see them. This universality is by no means the universality of the concept or understanding. This is not a case of a particular being determined by a universal; nothing is proved conclusively. The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated man (*gebildet*) keeps himself open are not a fixed applicable yardstick, but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others.¹⁶

Instead of the universality of the “concept”, Gadamer is pointing to the concrete universality of the group, the community. Thus he defines judgment as a submission of many perspectives to one. This is very much akin to Augustine; he is in fact offering an account of rationality that is very classical, in which rhetoric takes on a whole new importance as a means by which the whole man is ordered to what is truthful. The model is *phronesis*: a kind of wisdom that “presupposes a direction of the will, moral being (*hexis*).”¹⁷

Culture, or *historia*, must accomplish a great deal for Gadamer. For Augustine, it is the double law of love of God and love of neighbour that moves the heart to submit to the truth. However, this law is only realized concretely in the historical and physical reality of the Church. At the conclusion of the tenth book, Augustine sees in the Incarnation the total demand of self-denial, of self-

¹⁵ p. 19.

¹⁶ p. 17.

¹⁷ P. 22. Gadamer also discusses the importance of an “intuitional” dimension of knowledge, one which again presupposes a classical anthropology of the whole person; he describes this (after the 18th-century theologian, Oetinger) as a knowledge “of the heart.” This resonates with Augustine’s use of *cor* throughout the later books of *conf.*

emptying. In the Church, he has the concrete means by which this can come to pass. Otherwise, faith in the incarnate Christ remains overly abstract. This is what the chapters on biblical hermeneutics in the twelfth book seek to demonstrate.

Practically speaking, these chapters are not therefore about truth, but about unity as a means to the truth. Augustine urges readers to remain open to a variety of possible interpretations of Genesis; at the same time, he defends the internal coherence of his own interpretation. No doubt he is convicted of its accuracy. However, he will not hold it at the expense of the unity and edification of the faithful. Hence it is important that he explicitly clarifies that he is writing for the Church alone at this point.¹⁸ He feels no need to defend either the “truth of things or the truth of signs.”¹⁹ The discussion is rather about the model of community suggested by the hermeneutic method. To ask, therefore, whether one or another interpretation of a particular text is “*the* right interpretation” is to ask precisely the wrong question.²⁰ What is scripture for, Augustine asks? It is for the edification of the faithful, specifically the increase of the double love of God and neighbour. The reading of scripture is an exercise in understanding not the mind of the

¹⁸ *Conf.* 12.16.23.

¹⁹ 23.32, where Augustine says that the faithful, knowing scripture to be a true revelation, can assume a reliable relation between signs and things, namely, between the divine works and Moses’ expression of the same. Augustine also says (24.33) that Moses himself could not possibly express adequately in language the full significance of the things he seeks to represent. Augustine cannot see into the mind of Moses, but he does not need to; having confidence that he expresses a “true” thing well (“*apte*”), Augustine can say confidently that he has access to the truths of scripture. Language is a necessary but limited tool; the words are not identical with the Word, for “out of the narrowness of language, the truth of Scripture overflows and fills everyone who seeks with truth.” (27.37. “*Ita narratio dispensatoris tui sermocinaturis pluribus profutura parvo sermonis modulo scatet fluentia liquidae veritatis...*”). See also 13.29.44: “O man, what my scripture says, I say. Yet scripture speaks in time-conditioned language, and time does not touch my Word, existing with me in an equal eternity.” (“*O homo, nempe quod scriptura mea dicit, ego dico. Et tamen illa temporaliter dicit, verbo autem meo tempus non accedit, quia aequali mecum aeternitate consistit.*”).

²⁰ 18.27.

mediate writer (say, Moses), but the mind of God. It is therefore an *exercitatio* in the submission of the mind of the reader to the truth revealed in scripture. There can be many truths found in a part of scripture, so long as these are an expression of the heart's submission to the divine will. Thus the sense of "multiplicity" is not relativistic, because the scope of possible readings is limited by the agreed orthodoxy of the community of readers. Nevertheless the epistemic status of truth is entirely subordinate to the community as its end, precisely because it is a community constituted in submission *one to another in the act of submission to truth*. The double law of love has a single end.

This reading echoes the discussion in *conf.* 10.23.33 about the love of truth shared by all. This love, Augustine finds, does not bring joy because what men take to be the truth is often not the truth.

But why is it that 'truth engenders hatred'? Why does your man who preaches what is true become to them an enemy when they love the happy life which is simply joy grounded in truth? The answer must be this: their love for truth takes the form that they love something else and want this object of their love to be the truth; and because they do not wish to be deceived, they do not wish to be persuaded that they are mistaken. And so they hate the truth for the sake of the object which they love instead of the truth. They love truth for the light it sheds, but hate it when it shows them up as being wrong.²¹

Augustine echoes this at 12.25.34, when he says that the proud love an interpretation of a scriptural text because it is theirs, and not because it is true. The added element of the community, the other, structures the rebuke that the proud receive, for they are no longer "in communion" who love their own "truth" simply because it is theirs. The oneness of truth is reflected in the unity of the

²¹ 10.23.34. "*Cur autem veritas parit odium, et inimicus eis factus est homo tuus verum praedicans, cum ametur beata vita, quae non est nisi gaudium de veritate? Nisi quia sic amatur veritas, ut, quicumque aliud amant, hoc quod amant velint esse veritatem, et quia falli nollent, nōlunt convinci, quod falsi sint. Itaque propteream rem oderunt veritatem, quam pro veritate amant. Amant eam lucentem, oderunt eam redarguentem.*"

community: “*quoniam in commune omnium est amatoris veritatis.*”²² The truth is available to all freely in scripture, but under the condition that it is received specifically not as *privatam*. The “privacy” of ownership is refused in favour of *being owned* by the truth.

This is how the truth, identified always in the end with Christ the Word, can contain many in its simplicity: by the self-emptying of the self for the other. It is this self-emptying (*humilitas*), we have observed, that Augustine recognizes as the essential meaning of the Incarnation. Augustine has seen this offered as example; here it is a deeply practical *via*. On the hermeneutical level, Augustine concludes that he must always in principle be open to a better interpretation than his own, and he prays to receive it in the proper manner, as a gift, rather than a possession.²³

One suspects that the hermeneutic diversity imagined by Augustine is largely one of varying “depths” of penetration into the mysteries of the text of revelation. Augustine, echoing Origen and a long patristic tradition, insists that scripture deliberately speaks to variously skilled readers at appropriate levels; thus he must accept and encourage shallow or “carnal” readings of complex texts, so long as they are undertaken in faith, i.e. in the context of the agreed orthodoxy of the community.²⁴ Augustine, however, is not so much concerned to divide the faithful into groups of the initiate and uninitiate; more important is the image of scripture as a dark forest with depths innumerable, into which all must journey,

²² 12.25.34.

²³ 12.32.43. Gadamer echoes this in his demand that one remain open to the scope of possible interpretations by the “other”; cf. *supra*.

²⁴ 12.27.37. One can see in this book that, while Augustine’s reflections on creation clearly respond to Manichean positions concerning emanation and materialistic dualism, his thoughts about the nature of Christian community are a correction of the forms of false community that he regularly encountered as a young man, as a teacher and academic.

but into which all will not journey to the same extent. Scripture must be for the Church not only a reliable resource of spiritual riches, but a depthless one that can feed the depthless hunger of the loving soul on its *via ad patriam*.

In conclusion, in this vision of the Church as a “hermeneutic body” that is unified in its submission to the one truth, Augustine sees the best instantiation of the heaven of heavens on earth that he can hope for. For this reason he could not flee into the desert: here, in the messy “multiplicity” of the communal life of the Church, is the very hope of unity, and therefore peace.

IV. The Trinity: likeness and unlikeness abide in community

From the twelfth chapter (13.12.13) to the end of the thirteenth book, Augustine engages in an exercise in allegorical interpretation that is almost rapturous in tone, and truly an extended example of how scripture is used to interpret scripture in allegory. In doing this, I think that Augustine is demonstrating a particular depth of engagement with the text: the allegorical approach, far from being arbitrary, demonstrates the rich meaningfulness of the text of revelation. The “literal” meaning is not left behind; the text becomes a tool in the telling of a story about the life of the soul as the life of the Church.²⁵ It would be contrary to Augustine’s stated purposes to focus on the “correctness” of the details of his own interpretation, e.g. why does the creation of the heavenly bodies represent the faithful and their luminous works?²⁶ Augustine expresses an

²⁵ Jean Pépin describes how the necessary mysteriousness of Scripture reflects the transcendence of its object; in the demand for spiritual or allegorical reading, human reason is humbled, and a sense of obviousness of meaning gives way to the need for an *exercitatio* that is more spiritually and intellectually profitable; cf. “Saint Augustin et la fonction protreptique de l’allégorie”, in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (1958), pp. 243-286. See also L.M. Poland, “Augustine, Allegory and Conversion”, in *Journal of Literature and Theology* 2.1 (1988), pp. 37-48.

²⁶ Cf. 13.18.22.

almost childlike excitement at the ability of words to express multiple meanings (24.36), and by comparison, at how the allegorical method invites a variety of readings of a text. He is thus demonstrating not the truth or elegance of his particular reading, but rather his commitment to the ability of scripture to encompass a variety of readings.²⁷ The hermeneutical is a metaphor for the ontological, in the thirteenth as in the twelfth book. In the multiplicity and diversity of creation, Augustine understands the meaning of the divine “*bone valde*.” The whole work, once complete, offers a beauty greater than any of its parts. The unified whole praises God and declares his work, even in the rise and decay of its particular members.²⁸ God is endlessly “at work” in creation, forming and unifying; by the temporal gifts of his providence, the hope of unity is proffered and realized.

The summit of the “six days” work of creation is of course the creation of man in God’s image. This confirms the extent to which Augustine is reading the text of scripture through the lens of his own personal—but now also universal, since it is the story of the Church—experience of conversion. The image of the Trinity in man expresses Augustine’s sure conviction that the work of renewal is even now ongoing for those creatures for whom, unlike the heaven of heavens, the experience of creation and conversion is temporally distinct.

Augustine has spoken of the conferring of form as the essential work of the Word in creation.²⁹ This picture is clearly no longer adequate. As O’Donnell observes, it is not easy to distinguish between the divine works of the persons of

²⁷ 13.24.36.

²⁸ 13.36.33.

²⁹ See *uera rel.* 36.66 (“*forma omnium*”), as well as *div. qu.* 23; at several places, Augustine speaks explicitly of the threefold causality of the Trinity reflected in creation, usually as the cause of being, the cause of determination (i.e. being this or that), and the cause of remaining or “cohering” as this or that; cf. *div. qu.* 18 and *ep.* 11.3.

the Trinity, the *formatio* of the Word, and the *conversio* of the Spirit.³⁰ Certainly, the twelfth book shows that creation “*in principio*” is the special work of the Word. The work of the Spirit is progressively revealed in the meditation on creation; at 13.5.6, Augustine speaks again of creation from the formless chaos, and says that “now” he sees that God the Father was the maker, the Son, he in whom all was made, and the Spirit, the one who “moved over the face of the waters.”³¹ Augustine asks why Scripture delays speaking of the Spirit.³² The Spirit introduces a new language into the discourse about creation: activity as a kind of non-physical motion. There would be nothing to move “over” were there not something already present. He is careful to point out that the Spirit does not move in the sense of “corporeal space”, but he also does not exclude this dimension. The Spirit is a place, but also not a place: as a place, it is a “gift of rest.”³³ The term “*superferebatur*” describes the action of divine immutability over and in what is mutable. The divine unity unifies what is multiple, and thereby introduces the mutable creature to the immutable life of the Trinity.

At last, Augustine has a system of language to describe creation in a manner that overcomes the otherness of the creature and the divine: the immutable principle that moves. The creative activity of the Spirit is a divine giving of self that nevertheless does not violate the unity of the godhead. This insight leads Augustine to a full appreciation of the revealed Trinity in creation, which is itself described as both a unity and a community.

³⁰ O'Donnell (1992), Vol. III, p. 347. For this reason, I have resisted saying that Book 12 is “about” the Word, and Book 13 about the Holy Spirit, even though there is measure of truth in this analysis.

³¹ “*Et tenebam patrem in dei nomine, qui fecit haec, et filium in principii nomine, in quo fecit haec, et trinitatem credens deum meum, sicut credebam, quaerebam in eloquiis sanctis eius, et ecce spiritus tuus superferebatur super aquas.*”

³² 13.6.7. On the progressive revelation of the Spirit, see *Sermo* 52, as well as *ciu.* 11.24.

³³ 13.9.10.

In [being, knowing and willing] therefore, let him who is capable of so doing contemplate how inseparable in life they are: one life, one mind, and one essence, yet ultimately *there is distinction*, for they are inseparable, yet distinct. The fact is certain to anyone by introspection. Let him consider himself and reflect and tell me what is there. When, however, through his investigation of these three, he has found something out and has made his report on that, he should not suppose that he discovered the immutable that transcends them—that which immutably is, immutably knows, and immutably wills. It baffles thought to inquire whether these three functions are the ground which constitutes the divine Trinity, or whether the three components are present in each person, so that each person has all three, or whether both these alternatives are true, in the sense that, in ways beyond finite understanding, *the ultimate Being exists in both simplicity and multiplicity, the persons being defined by relation to each other, yet infinite in themselves.*³⁴

Augustine is clearly aware of the limitations of the method of attempting to comprehend the divine mode of being through its image in the creature. However the creation of man as *imago Dei* authorizes this language, and enables Augustine to conceive in an orthodox manner how the divine can include a fundamental principle of relationality.

The Spirit alone is not the agent of unification, but the whole Trinity working in a manner in which its roles are very difficult to separate. Certain distinctions can be made, and Augustine does distinguish between the creation of man in God's image, and the *formatio* which is the result of the work of conversion. For the creatures that inhabit the heaven of heavens, there is no meaningful distinction. For man, freedom is a more complex gift: the *capax Dei* which man is granted reveals the purposes of salvation inscribed in creation, but

³⁴ 13.11.12 (italics mine). "*In his igitur tribus [esse, nosse, velle] quam sit inseparabilis vita, et una vita et una mens et una essentia, quam denique inseparabilis distinctio et tamen distinctio, videat qui potest. Certe coram se est; adtendat in se et videat et dicat mihi. Sed cum invenerit in his aliquid, et dixerit, non iam se putet invenisse illud, quod supra ista est incommutabile, quod est incommutabiliter et scit incommutabiliter et vult incommutabiliter: et utrum propter tria haec et ibi trinitas, an in singulis haec tria, ut terna singulorum sint, an utrumque miris modis simpliciter et multipliciter infinito in se sibi fine....*" By highlighting this passage as a key text, we are noting the presence in *conf.* of the full conception of man as made in the image of the trinitarian God; moreover, by this, we justify the leap we will presently make in this essay to the later books of *trin.*

alone it does not guarantee its own fulfillment. Hence it is appropriate that Augustine discusses the work of the Church in the thirteenth book: the importance of works of faith, works of mercy, the witness and sacrifice of the saints, and the life of the sacraments; the importance of scripture as an authority “stretched” over all alike in order to humble the proud; and the role of the judgment of the faithful that serves them in discerning as a community what is good and what is evil. All of these are means by which the Spirit uses what is “external” in order to nurture the interior process of conversion. In these, Augustine sees the Trinity at work, bringing the whole man, and the whole Church, into a more perfect union with it.

Conclusions

Conf. opens with the universally restless heart: *inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te* (1.1.1.); it concludes with the promise of the eternal rest of the Sabbath: *sabbato vitae aeternae requiescamus in te* (13.36.51). Although creation and conversion are distinct moments for the embodied creature, the negativity of sin cannot mar the fundamental unity of purpose linking them.³⁵ We have argued that the decisive moment in Augustine’s conversion is the vision of the incarnate mediator, echoed again at the conclusion of the tenth book. The *verax mediator*, in the flesh, manifests what the Trinity as a whole acts out: the mysterious manner in which what is perfectly unified and at peace can encompass and enter into relation with what is multiple or “other.”

Were this an analysis of the final books of *conf.*, this picture would be seriously inadequate. Let us conclude by returning to memory and the specific

³⁵ Vannier, p. 157.

trail of images and themes that we have tried to exploit in order to flesh out its larger significance in this text.

1. The christological perspective forms the character of the larger investigation. Augustine's memory-based anthropology compels him to compare his own "absence" from God with God's presence as testified by the mediator. In the person of the mediator, he sees a promise of the union of human and divine, and a practical *via* by which he might respond to the grace of the Incarnation with an approach to the divine light by affection and adoration. The thirteenth book concludes with man as made in the image of the Trinity. This image reveals a given *capax Dei* by which we are introduced to a new vision of human personality as something actually constituted in an encounter with and relation to another.³⁶

2. Accordingly, the discussion of creation in *conf.* is motivated by anthropological concerns. We have suggested reasons for the recurring attention to hermeneutical issues, but we have also argued that these serve the primary anthropological project on both a literal level (the authority of scripture as a source of unity) and a metaphorical level (the ability of scripture to invite multiple readings as an example of the ability of the Church to contain a multiplicity of the faithful in a unified community). In looking first at time, and subsequently at the idea of formless matter and the heaven of heavens, Augustine has sought to find man's place in an established order, and (hopefully) to find thereby a kind of rest in that order.

³⁶ In this, the *intimum* and *summum* are found to coincide; cf. Vannier, pp. 135-137. In this we have a textual bridge to *trin.*

3. The discussion of memory is extended by the discussion of time in the eleventh book. There are clear passages that we have noted that attest to the fact that, anthropologically speaking, the problem of “distance” from God is still being considered in terms of temporal disjunction. This language fades from prominence after the eleventh book; it is not supplanted, but supplemented, by a language of space or spiritual “place.” Augustine ultimately sees the resolution of the “problem” posed by memory in the tenth book in two distinct but related ideas. First, the ability of God as triune to entertain “distinction” and yet remain unified, and thereby to contain and comprehend the multiplicity and discursiveness that qualifies temporal existence (in the *aeterna ratio*). As we have observed, a language that embraces a “contradiction” such as this is authorized by the declaration that man is made in God’s image: this opens a whole new avenue of theological reflection on personality (cf. *supra*).

Second, the fact that the triune God forms and unifies by a self-contained and unilateral act. Augustine realizes that it is an entirely generous work of grace; this is a relief to his sense of anxiety. Augustine does not have to overcome the conditions of his knowing and being. All he must do is *submit* himself to the Spirit that works in him, enflaming his heart *in affectu*, in imitation of the humility of Christ.³⁷ Peace is not merely an end for which he hopes; it is more than eschatological. In the act of creation, the Spirit is already at work in *formatio* and *illuminatio*, imparting the rest of the Sabbath upon the disorder of the primal chaos, both in the cosmos, and in the depths of Augustine’s soul.

³⁷ At 13.9.10, Augustine returns to the language of *pondus* as a tendency to return to one’s proper place, to “ascend” to the *patria*.

Marie-Anne Vannier argues that *intentio* is another word for *conversio*.³⁸

We conclude by echoing this reflection. In the eleventh book, Augustine prays that the *distentio* of the life of memory might be translated into the *intentio* of *meditatio* or *contemplatio*. In the peace-imparting work of the Spirit, Augustine sees a way in which he can rest in the “eternal present.”³⁹ There will always be a tension in bodily existence; but this tension can be fruitfully translated into the work of formation, in the ordinary life of the Church, and more specifically by growth in the *exercitatio* of *meditatio*: this, Augustine suggests, is the significance of the injunction to “be fruitful and multiply.”⁴⁰ A greater stability can be progressively attained in the present, and the distraction of discursiveness can be translated into the simple act of adoration.

³⁸ Vannier, p. 138.

³⁹ On the Spirit and the rest of Sabbath, see also *Gn. litt.* 4.8.16.

⁴⁰ 13.24.36; Augustine comes to this interpretation with the aid of Rom. 12:2: “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

CHAPTER 10:

DE TRINITATE

Turning finally to *trin.* requires us to acknowledge that the center of this dissertation lies in the analysis of *conf.* 11 and 12. In this, we have placed all of Augustine's reflections upon memory as a *locus* for the unity of body and soul thus far in the context of a theology of creation. Hence the psychological focus shifts from epistemology to the soul's spiritual experience of a sensed tension present in creation itself, a radical alterity between creature and creator. The temporal and eternal, we have seen, are united in Christ, as Word in creation and saviour in reconciliation. Hence the unity of body and soul in man must be seen through the lens of the incarnation of the Word, in its full eschatological meaning.

Trin. has its own specific goal, attempting to discern reflections of the creator in the created, to the extent of finding a theological method in the idea of man as *imago Dei*. The Incarnation again arises as the central principle through which the Trinity can be known and enjoyed. By a different route, *conf.* and *trin.* arrive at a similar end: a harmony and unification of the temporal and eternal in Christ, with the result of spiritual peace for the soul that participates in the same.

The part of *trin.* that is most directly concerned with memory is the eleventh book. In this relatively neglected book, Augustine makes an effort to discern a trace of the image of God in man in his "inner" psychological operations insofar as they pertain to the perception of sensible phenomena. Here, as in the tenth book, Augustine continues to use and refine the trinity of memory, intellect and will, having basically rejected in the same book the idea of an *imago Dei* based on a paradigm of pure self-knowledge. The opening chapters of the twelfth

book call into question Augustine's own assumptions about the location of the boundary between the inner and the outer. Augustine is not merely seeking to identify the psychological "place" of the image of God in man. The question becomes: to what are the powers of the soul ordered? What is their object and end? This question coincides with a significant development in the argument in which the Incarnation is brought to the fore as the key to understanding how man is constituted in God's image. The trinitarian model alone is overly abstract; the incarnational model makes the trinitarian model intelligible as an object of contemplation, while providing a practical *via* for the integration of man into the life of the community of the Trinity.

The thirteenth book thus confirms that everything, that is, all of Christian wisdom, is contained in the Incarnation. As part of the argument, it enables the success of the *exercitatio* intended by the later books of *trin.*¹ What this means in

¹ On the sense of the term *exercitatio*, see Lewis Ayres, "The Christological context of Augustine's *De trinitate* XIII: toward relocating Books VIII-XV", in *Augustinian Studies* 29:1 (1998), pp. 111-139. As he points out, the specific term "*exercitatio*" is used rarely by Augustine in the sense of an *exercitatio animi*; it occurs twice in the latter part of *trin.*, at 9.12.17 and 13.20.26. Ayres rightly warns us from taking *exercitatio* to mean something purely mental and abstract. Augustine does not use this term precisely, but we find a similar sense of spiritual "discipline" or intellectual exercise in earlier works, for example, *mag.* and *mus.* At *mag.* 8.21, in the context of an extended discussion of kinds of signs, Augustine says to Adeodatus: "However, with so many detours, it's difficult to say at this point where you and I are trying to get to! Maybe you think we're playing around and diverting the mind from serious matters by some little puzzles that seem childish (*quasi quibusdam puerilibus quaestiunculis, arbitraris*), or that we're pursuing some result that is only small or modest—or, if you suspect that this discussion might issue in some important result, you want to know straight away what it is (or at least to hear me say what it is!). Well, I'd like you to believe that I haven't set to work on mere trivialities in this conversation. Though we do perhaps play around (*quamvis fortasse ludamus*), this should itself not be regarded as childish. Nor are we thinking about small or modest goods. Yet if I were to say that there is a happy and everlasting life, and I want us to be led there under the guidance of God (namely Truth Himself) by stages that are suitable to our weak steps, I'm afraid I might seem laughable for having set out on such a long journey by considering signs rather than the things themselves that are signified." This passage should be compared to the sense in which Books 9-14 of *trin.* are clearly some sort of preparation, in which the image of the creator is sought in the created things as a preparation for beholding the thing itself that is imaged. Consider also the opening of the sixth book of *mus.*, somewhat more apologetic and impatient in tone: "Long enough, I think, and also quite childishly (*pueriliter*) have we dwelt through five books in the traces of the rhythms that belong to the durations of times. Perhaps our dutiful labour (*officiosus labor*) may excuse these our trifles among benevolent persons, a labour we considered worth undertaking for no other reason than to tear away young persons or men of any age whom God has endowed with a good mind, not with excessive haste but somewhat gradually and under the

the end is that the attempt to surpass memory, the variable conditions of the “outer”, need not be successful. The Incarnation is a principle of unification of the temporal and eternal, and not merely a means to surpass one in favour of the other. To whatever extent we might compare the final books of *conf.* with those of *trin.*, their unity of purpose lies in the emergence of the central role of the Incarnation, epistemologically, spiritually and argumentatively.

What is going on in these books in general? We shall depend on Augustine’s own explanations, which recur throughout the text, in part because of the unusual and rushed manner in which *trin.* was published. Most scholars by now agree that a traditional and firm division of the text into two parts is unhelpful.² The text itself encourages no such division, even though Augustine speaks of a “new approach” to the same subject matter at several points. Augustine recapitulates the argument of the whole work early in the fifteenth book.³ A summary, based upon this recapitulation, follows.

guidance of reason, from the carnal senses (*a sensibus carnis*) and carnal literature.” The reason given for the “labours” of the first five books of *mus.*, is the same as that given in *trin.*, namely, the purifying of the mind’s eye from “carnal conceptions.” It is arguable whether Augustine the bishop abandons the liberal arts as useful educational tools; *doctr. chr.* suggests otherwise. Nevertheless the basic structure of learning remains: for the “Christian philosopher”, a disciplined pedagogy must be undertaken, under the guidance of truth. True propositions cannot simply be poured into the ready mind; Ayres echoes Hadot in saying that these “exercises” have a spiritual, practical dimension; we are arguing the stronger position that they are entirely ordered to this end, namely, the nurturing of practical wisdom and its virtues.

² Whether the “first part” consists in Books 1–7 or Books 1–8. On the structure of the argument of *trin.*, see Ayres (1998); J. Cavadini, “The Structure and Intention of Augustine’s *De trinitate*”, *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), pp. 103–123; R.D. Crouse, “St. Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method”, *Studia Patristica* 16/2, ed. E. Livingstone (Akademie Verlag: Berlin, 1985), pp. 501–510; Donald Daniels, “The Argument of the *De Trinitate* and St. Augustine’s Theory of Signs”, *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977), pp. 33–54; Edmund Hill, “St Augustine’s *De Trinitate*: the doctrinal significance of its structure”, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 19 (1973), pp. 277–286.

³ At 15.3.4–5. The translation we are using is that of Edmund Hill (New City Press: New York, 1991). We will use the traditional paragraph and chapter numerations, even though Hill does not reproduce these in his translation.

Books 1–4. These concern the unity and equality of the Trinity, as demonstrated from scripture. Augustine shows that the Son is not less because he is “sent”; the Trinity works in an inseparable manner.

Book 5. Some things are said of God with respect to substance, and other things with respect to the relation between the persons of the Trinity.

Books 6–7. Because of the unity of the Trinity, special attributes such as “wisdom” are not reserved for one person alone.

Book 8. This is clearly a book of transition. Augustine says he is studying the “same things” but in a “deeper manner.” There is no inadequacy with the first seven books, insofar as they defend the coherence of orthodoxy on the basis of scripture. The inadequacy is rather in the soul of man who seeks to understand. The unity and equality of the Trinity are a function of God’s unchangeability and intelligibility (in the sense of being supremely non-corporeal); these attributes are perceived only in a “fleeting and partial” manner because the eye of the mind is habitually formed by a “carnal” mode of perception. Augustine wishes to effectively counter this tendency: hence the dimension of purgation or *exercitatio* that frames the rest of the work. What must occur is a “conversion” of the mind to that by which it is made so that it can become a “good mind”, and likewise of the will so that it may become a “good will.” The method is thus more relational than analogical. Scripture is studied because it nurtures the increase of the virtues, chiefly love (4.6); love then is the basis for the method of proceeding (and the first thing in which Augustine identifies a trinitarian “life” (“*quaedam vita*”, 9.13)) because it is inherently relational, joining together two things by means of its own power.

Books 9-10. Augustine seeks the image of God in the mind of man. The trinity of mind, knowledge and love is surpassed for that of memory, understanding and will. Augustine claims that the latter offers greater clarity and “precision”; it will be one of our tasks to explain why this trinity is ultimately preferred to that of mind in general. At the conclusion of the tenth book, Augustine says that the mind that remembers, understands and loves itself is not in the same act able to distinguish itself clearly from what is “other” than itself, i.e. what is corporeal, and hence a further effort of intellectual *exercitatio* is required.

Book 11. A kind of trinity is sought in the operation of the senses, in particular, of sight. This is clearly inadequate for Augustine, since this would pertain to the “outer man.” Memory is discussed in some detail here, and we will therefore examine this book closely.

Books 12-14. Augustine sees these books as constituting an argumentative unity. He distinguishes between knowledge (*scientia*) and wisdom (*sapientia*) as pertaining, respectively, to temporal matters and eternal matters. He wishes to seek the image of God in what is superior in the nature of man, namely, the mind in its highest operations. In these books, he moves from a trinitarian to an incarnational model. In re-appropriating the basic theme of the earlier books, namely, the unity of God, Augustine is showing how the Incarnation and the Trinity are inseparable mysteries, the one a practical as well as speculative access to the other.

The fifteenth and final book offers a remarkable conclusion. In a sense, the previous fourteen books have been a preparation for it: Augustine declares in

the fifteenth book that we are ready at last to approach and behold the mystery of the Trinity in itself. Not surprisingly, the fulfillment of this expectation is not quite so simple. Augustine must therefore explain how these mysteries are known in this life and approached as a matter of gradual spiritual progress. Hence this book brings to fruition the themes introduced in the eighth book.

In order to maintain our focus on the significance of memory and time-consciousness in the context of the larger argument, we shall pursue three particular goals.

1. We shall closely examine the eleventh book on the “outer” operations of the soul, and conclude by reflecting on why Augustine prefers to work with the image-trinity of memory, understanding and will instead of one that is based more abstractly in “mind.”

2. We shall explore the dualism of *scientia* and *sapientia* especially as expressed in terms of the eternal vs. the temporal. This will transform the anthropological approach based upon the *imago Dei* into an incarnational one, loosely parallel to what we find in the final books of *conf.* Faith is structurally and thematically the key element of these books. It is the subject matter of Book 13. Augustine continually highlights the importance of this book, both in itself, and as taking up the subject matter of Book 4. Faith is important in part because it grounds the activity of the seeking soul in a theology of Christ’s body.

3. Finally, we shall conclude by looking briefly at the final book as a resolution to the “dilemma” of *scientia*: the Holy Spirit, as the personification of love, makes possible the participation of man in the life of the resurrected Christ.

It is our hope that these three points will gather together the multiple purposes motivating this dissertation. Our intention is to avoid a detailed perusal of the argument of *trin.*: this would suggest an overly ambitious scope, as well as give the false impression that what we are offering here is “an interpretation” of the whole text, in all its richness and complexity. Nor do we wish to suggest that the concept of memory, as it grounds the trinitarian image of God in man, can explain more of the overall argument than it really can.

We wish rather to leave the reader with an anthropological picture that is deeply consistent throughout Augustine’s career (up to the point of *trin.*). However, this should not detract from genuine developments in theological anthropology, much of which however can be explained by the different goals of different texts and genres used at different stages in Augustine’s professional life. Thus, memory is no longer simply a key in an argument about the unity of man’s nature, but rather becomes a significant element of a spiritual theodicy of participation in the body of Christ, and therefore in the life of the triune God. Our ending point is therefore inevitably different from where we began, with early philosophical musings on the unity of soul and body: the Incarnation as the model of the unity of man in himself and of man with God. According to the manner in which humanity is taken up into the life of the Trinity through Christ, knowledge of God cannot consist in a direct intellectual apprehension, purged of all aspects of the life of the body. It is rather a participatory union that is the result of each thing finding its proper place in the providential order. For man, in the words of *mus.*, this means to live “within the bounds of memory”; the goal is an epistemic humility, an acceptance of the fact that there cannot be an adequate apprehension of the divine in and through the creature. Instead, there must be an ordering of

man's affections, to the end of ensuring constant spiritual progress, through the virtues, to an eschatological, contemplative vision of the countenance of God.

The inadequacy of the trinity of self-knowledge

Augustine looks to the image of God in man with a desire to examine “more deeply” the attributes of equality and unity that characterize the Trinity. We indicated above that the final book recapitulates and completes many of the themes introduced in the eighth book. The eighth book talks of love as a “kind of life” that joins together the soul and its object.⁴ The ninth book opens with the question of whether the Holy Spirit is properly called love.⁵ Given the “new” approach of these books, Augustine does not proceed by talking directly of the Holy Spirit, but rather of the role that the will or love plays in the soul. He is seeking some reflection of the relationship between the Spirit, the Son and the Father in the soul. Augustine considers the image, the sign, and not the thing itself, as a more “befitting” object for the state of our weak, enfeebled mind.⁶ The matter of the Holy Spirit is explicitly postponed until the fifteenth book.

The mind knows itself through itself, that is, in the act of knowledge. Love joins the mind together with itself as object, thus offering a glimpse of a trinitarian motif. In this case, mind, knowledge and love (*mens, notitia, amor*) are functionally inseparable and predicated relatively. This picture however is misleading in giving the appearance of stability. The mind is fundamentally changeable in nature.⁷ The stability in which mind shares has its origin elsewhere,

⁴ 8.10.14.

⁵ 9.1.1.

⁶ 9.2.2.

⁷ 9.6.9. The mind is changeable in at least two ways: first, as created, it has come to be when it previously did not exist and, second, it possesses its attributes in greater and lesser degrees. Thus

“above” the mind, in the light of the eternal reasons which enable right judgment.⁸

This is the first discussion of the concept of an inner *verbum*, or inner speaking (*dictio*). The point of this idea is to inextricably link concept-formation with a principle that is superior to the soul, namely, the influence of the eternal reasons.⁹ True conceptions, Augustine says, are *like* a word begotten internally in the mind. Love then joins the mind to the word of truth (the true concept) that arises in the mind. The changeable nature of the mind abides, because this knowledge is variable: it comes to be when it has not previously existed as a word of the mind. Moreover, a conception can be wrong, or ill-formed. The mind is therefore only joined perfectly to the word of knowledge when it is “known and loved in relation to God” who is the truth. To be in error is *cupiditas*.¹⁰ Augustine says that *cupiditas* occurs when the mind is forgetful of the dependence it has upon what is higher and which enables right judgment.¹¹ The eternal reasons, then, are not identified with God, even though they are inevitably associated with God as

the mind does not cease to be a mind, although it may cease to be a good mind. The important qualification to this is the sense in which, through habituation, something can become almost “like” nature. Augustine speaks this way, for example, about the change of the corruptible body in the resurrection, which is made fit for heaven “not by a loss of its natural substance, but by a change in its quality” (*ciu.* 13.23).

⁸ Cf. 9.6.10; “...aliis omnino regulis supra mentem nostram incommutabiliter manentibus, vel approbare apud nosmetipsos, vel improbare convincimur, cum recte aliquid approbamus aut improbamus.” 6.11; “itaque de istis secundum illam (ipsa forma inconcussae ac stabilis veritate) judicamus, et illam cernimus rationalis mentis intuitu.”

⁹ On intellectual mediation, see Rowan Williams, “*Sapientia* and the Trinity: reflections on the *De trinitate*”, in *Melanges T.J. Van Bavel*, B. Bruning et al., eds. (Leuven University Press: Leuven, 1990), pp. 317-332. Note that Augustine never uses any terminology such as “mental word” (*verbum mentis*); “word of knowledge” (*verbum notitiae*) would be closer to the text. (Cf. 15.11.20, “*verbum hominis... quando eadem scientia intus dicitur*”; 15.10.19, “*verbum... quod ad nullam pertinet linguam*”; 15.10.18, “*locutiones cordis*”.) In either case, the discussion is not focused on the nature of this word, but rather on what conditions must obtain in order for a word to be a word: the word must be united to the knowing *mens* by charity and not *cupiditas*. For this reason, at 15.11.20, Augustine says that true conceptions will give rise to good works: “*sed etiam hic cum verum verbum est, tunc est initium boni operis*.”

¹⁰ 9.10.8. The discussion at 15.10.17-11.20 does not add significantly to this picture.

¹¹ Cf. Lewis Ayres, “The discipline of self-knowledge in Augustine’s *De trinitate* Book X”, in *The Passionate Intellect*, Lewis Ayres, ed. (Transaction: Brunswick, 1995), p. 271; I. Bochet, *Saint Augustin et le désir de Dieu* (Études Augustiniennes: Paris, 1982), esp. pp. 36-44.

personifying truth; their epistemological role is imprecise here. Of greater significance is the idea that the soul reflects God, or demonstrates better functional integrity, when it displays a constant epistemic humility. Knowledge is not reduced to the theological principle of charity, nevertheless Augustine does not want to call it knowledge except when it is moved by charity as opposed to *cupiditas*.

The mind that seeks to know itself, or its knowledge, does not become identical with the forms or “reasons” that enable judgment.¹² If knowledge occurs in an ideal manner, the mind is identical with its knowledge, understood as the word or form begotten by the mind, in the mind. Identity therefore presupposes the presence of the “eternal reasons” to the mind, but only through the mediation of mind’s productivity.¹³ The process of self-knowledge is discursive and dialectical: no identity can be assumed; rather, a greater likeness is sought after. The mind is made more stable by increased and deliberate conformity to the reasons which illuminate its operations. It never ceases to be changeable, but of course this changeability is the reason for hope as the mind seeks conformity with the eternal reasons. Augustine is not describing an epistemological analysis of concept formation; rather he is prescribing an intellectual way of life, a habit of recollection or mindfulness that shapes the character of the intellectual soul.

The ninth book confirms this reading by concluding with a discussion (which carries into the tenth book) of the *appetitus inveniendi*, or the desire of the

¹² Here, Augustine allows the use of *rationes* for the forms even though previously (cf. *div. quaest.* 83) he preferred *formae* or *idei*. This may be because of the materialistic associations of the *rationes seminales*.

¹³ The theory of forms here is, of course, not purely Platonic. Augustine is not saying that the forms subsist in or by the mind, as Cicero suggests (*de oratore* 7), though they clearly have serve to enable cognition. This idea is Aristotelian, originally. The abiding transcendence of the forms locates Augustine more with Plotinus and Porphyry on this topic, than with Ciceronian Stoicism (cf. Gersh (1986), Vol. 1, pp. 132-154).

mind to know that which it does not yet understand. This sense of “will” precedes knowledge and gives rise to it, but it is distinct from the sort of “love” that Augustine has in mind which is a product of knowledge, and a principle which unifies the mind with its knowledge. These are related, and Augustine calls one the offspring of the other. Their distinctness confirms for Augustine that he has not yet found a way to conceive of the mind in a perfectly stable state of contemplation. The *appetitus inveniendi* suggests a state of lack, and this brings Augustine back to an old, Platonic question: how can the mind seek, or desire, what it does not already in some sense know? The dialectical and discursive character of knowledge brings us again to the question of recollection. If the mind seeks to become like that which it knows, does this not suggest that mind already stands in some sort of relationship with that which it seeks? As in the parable of the woman who has lost a coin, in *conf.* 10.18.27, if the illuminating reasons can be sought by the mind, does this not suggest that they are never absent from the mind?

In the tenth book, Augustine investigates this question as a matter of self-knowledge. He concludes that the mind knows itself in the act of knowing “something”; that is, it knows itself adequately as “in act.” While the mind seeks to know itself, he says, it “knows itself as seeking and *not* knowing.”¹⁴ For Augustine, this is enough. The desire to know (*appetitus inveniendi*), or the will in general, must be comprehensive of both possession and lack, poverty and plenty.

What then is the point of speaking of self-knowledge? The imperative to “know thyself” is for Augustine not so much a literal expectation as an

¹⁴ 10.3.5. “*Novit enim se quaerentem atque nescientem, dum se quaerit ut noverit.*”

announcement of the value of mind as superior to corporeal things and the images formed from them. It is an essential function of the mind to judge and assess what comes in through the senses; nevertheless mind remains “free” of the senses in this very judging element, as we have seen in Augustine’s earlier writings. Habit tells us that sensible things are most easily perceived and understood, since they are most familiar; on the contrary, says Augustine (echoing Aristotle), it is rather the case that knowledge itself is the most knowable thing of all.¹⁵ But, as he found in the ninth book, mind knows itself in the act of knowing *something*: it is not immediately and abstractly present to itself. Images are always present in the memory, and mind therefore cannot think itself without images.¹⁶ It is for this reason that the mind becomes confused, and cannot distinguish between itself and what is corporeal or based upon corporeal images. This confusion is what motivates the writing of subsequent books, in particular 11-14, since an *exercitatio* is deemed necessary for the correction of this misapprehension, and for the habitual reformation of the soul’s intuition to rightly “value” things spiritual over things corporeal.

The final two chapters of the tenth book announce a decisive transition to and preference for the trinitarian image of memory, intellect and will over that of mind, knowledge and love. There are two reasons for this. At 11.17, Augustine discusses three aspects of the process of learning: what is learned, how greatly or how well it is learned, and to what end it is learned.¹⁷ These three things—ability (*ingenium*), knowledge (*doctrina*) and use (*usus*)—are aligned with memory and

¹⁵ 10.7.10.

¹⁶ 10.7.10. This includes verbal images, as well as pre-verbal “*verba*” (cf. *supra*).

¹⁷ Ayres discusses the Ciceronian roots of this passage, cf. pp. 289-290. Hill translates these as “disposition, learning and practice.”

intellect and will: ability and knowledge are the province of all three, but *usus* is in a special way associated with the will.

The third however is to be found in the use the will now makes of what the memory and understanding hold, whether it refers them to something else or whether it takes delight in them as ends in themselves. To use something is to put it at the will's disposal; to enjoy it is to use it with an actual, not merely anticipated joy. Hence everyone who enjoys, uses; for he puts something at the disposal of the will for the purposes of enjoyment. But not everyone who uses, enjoys, not if he wants what he puts at the disposal of the will for the sake of something else and not for its own.¹⁸

The will determines the specific orientation of the soul by characterizing the quality of its affections: is the soul ordered to self or to God in its loves? This is manifest in the manner of the soul's relation to things other than itself, and not merely in the mode and extent of its self-knowledge. The soul does not easily distinguish between itself and what is other, Augustine has said. Rather than begin with an abstract conception of the self as object, Augustine instead begins with the soul-in-relation, the soul as brought to fruition in its proper end. The epistemological order, in which the intellect should constantly be in remembrance of the higher principles that enable its operations, is an order of "valuation" as well.¹⁹

Herein lies the second reason for the preference for a trinity that is based upon memory. The ordering of things according to their value, or intended end,

¹⁸ 10.11.17. "*Iam vero usus tertius in voluntate est, pertractante illa quae in memoria et intelligentia continentur, sive ad aliquid ea referat, sive eorum fine delectata conquiescat. Uti enim, est assumere aliquid in facultatem voluntatis: frui est autem, uti cum gaudio, non adhuc spei, sed iam rei. Proinde omnis qui fruitur, utitur; assumit enim aliquid in facultatem voluntatis, cum fine delectationis: non autem omnis qui utitur, fruitur; si id quod in facultatem voluntatis assumit, non propter illud ipsum, sed propter aliud appetivit.*"

¹⁹ The term "value" is inadequate; this idea is best expressed in the language of the theological virtues, as we will see Augustine doing in Book 15. Some readers of Augustine accuse him of making every act of the intellectual soul directly dependent on grace, and therefore philosophically meaningless. It would be difficult to draw such an interpretation from *trin.*; at issue here is the idea of memory as a habit of remembrance—remembrance of causality (whether we take this as efficient causality, or causality in the less determinate sense of illumination)—with the intended end of humility. The soul that is humble acts with the greatest balance and integration of the tri-personal powers of the soul, and thus best reflects the triune God.

presupposes memory as a psychological foundation, linking the soul to a variety of objects and loves, both those past and those anticipated, those possessed and those yet absent. Memory defines the soul as a thing that stands perpetually in relation—and therefore perpetually fit for progress.²⁰ Hence in the eleventh book Augustine insists that we must be exercised in a discussion of the things that are added to our awareness “in time.”²¹ Memory is both a negative and a positive: it explains how one can be distracted by a multitude of cares, and confused about their worth, but it also offers intimations about how there can be a constant link to a unifying “ground” even in the midst of such conditions. Augustine says that we proceed to the eleventh book out of a concern that we might not distinguish adequately between memory and the understanding: the mind that actively seeks to know itself is not apparently able to distinguish between its activity and its object, between what it possesses and does not yet possess. Clarity on this matter is best obtained by examining mind in act, “in time.”

Book 11: memory and body

Memory is discussed here in the greatest detail as something associated with the presence and retention of sense-images in the soul: this function of memory we have seen amply described in earlier writings, especially *sol.*, *an. quant.*, *mus.* and of course *conf.* 10. Augustine describes memory as that which enables judgment, and therefore as the psychological foundation for knowledge. Memory lends unity to the data of what is mutable and “becoming.” It is also representative of the extent to which the intellectual soul is bound by a discursive mode of knowing, since it demonstrates the dependence of mind on the body as a

²⁰ Cf. 10.11.18. “*Quod vero memoria dicitur, ad aliquid relative dicitur.*”

²¹ 10.12.19.

tool for filling the “stomach” of the memory—a vivid image from *conf.* 10—given that the soul requires instruction in order for the forms of mathematical values and speculative ideas to be drawn meaningfully from the memory.

At the conclusion of the eleventh book of *trin.*, Augustine informs the reader that he has not yet begun to consider the “inner man.” Augustine has said that he is seeking the image of God in that part of man that is “most noble”, namely, the mind. However, this book is concerned with mind, in that sense—perception, imagination and recollection all depend on the judging faculty of the intellectual soul. What is lacking in the consideration of mind as it is related to what stands “outside” the body is a differentiation of the proper objects of the intellect. At what point do we have mind in relation to an object that shares in its attributes of immateriality, immortality and simplicity? Can mind rise above the fundamental conditions of its knowing? In a certain sense, it cannot; we have seen this already in *conf.* In seeking after the “inner man”, Augustine wants to observe the mind in its extraordinary relation to what stands “above” the mind. There he expects to find the *imago Dei*. The “interior” is merely a stepping-stone to the “superior.”

The exercise of looking for traces of a trinitarian image in acts of sense-perception is required by the fact that these are “more familiar.” Augustine begins by defending the unity of man: if the bodily is also “called man”, then the external reality must reflect the internal ordering principles of the soul.²² At 11.5.8, Augustine says that the highest part of man receives the divine imprint directly, without any intervening “nature” or mediator. The bodily in turn reflects the

²² 11.1.1.

divine *ordo*, but as mediated by soul as an ordering principle that is itself subject to the higher.

There is also a pedagogical motivation at work: since the sensible is more familiar, it more easily attracts interest by habitually forming the way in which man thinks. “We have to adapt ourselves to this illness”, Augustine says in the prologue, precisely in the hope of curing it. The pedagogical exercise intends to give rise to a disciplined formation of the will. Throughout this book, Augustine reminds the reader that the will is free to attach itself to a variety of objects. It has a proper function in the sensible realm, and this book seeks to demonstrate that it can fulfill this function and yet not be constrained by it. At 8.5 Augustine mentions the example of someone who takes a walk, whose mind subsequently “wanders” to subjects other than the act of walking in a particular environment. In like manner, he says, “the will averts the conscious attention from what is in the memory simply by not thinking about it.” Memory, as formed by sensible experience, is determinative, and yet the mind can learn to cultivate a studied detachment with respect to the sensible.

Augustine finds in the bodily life of the rational soul two parallel trinities that spring, respectively, from the sight of the eyes and the sight of the mind. The analogy between sense and understanding is familiar. In the act of sight, Augustine distinguishes between the thing seen, the vision that is activated by the sensation of the thing, and the will or “conscious intention” that directs the capacity of sight to one thing or another.²³ Augustine’s account of how vision occurs is here, more than elsewhere, strikingly Aristotelian. Augustine distinguishes between the priority of the object seen (as the cause of seeing) and

²³ 11.2.2.

the priority of the faculty of vision (which is only potential until actualized as the “informed sense which we call sight” (“*sensus informatus*”)). Augustine observes the unlikeness of the three elements, for on the side of the one seeing, there is the faculty of vision, and the conscious will to see; on the side of the thing seen, there is object as such. The unlikeness is not obvious, for the “form of the body we see” and the form produced in the sense faculty (the image) cannot be distinguished except “by reason.” Like Aristotle and Plotinus before him, Augustine compares the formation of sense-images to the impression made by a seal in wax. The form of each is distinguished only at a later moment in time, when the seal is separated from the wax. The senses, Augustine suggests, are more like water than wax, in that the image is no longer manifestly present once the object is removed; yet it does not follow from this that no impression was made. Clearly visible images are impressed in a somewhat more sophisticated manner than the example indicates since, as Aristotle observes, if the object seen actually touches the eye, vision no longer occurs.

The operative trinity of sight spans the boundary between sensible and intelligible: the thing seen is external to the body; vision pertains to the body, but also to the soul “with respect to the body”; the will to see belongs “only to the soul.”²⁴ Augustine notes that these three are different, and yet express a unity in the extent to which the first two are distinguished only with difficulty. Memory functions in a passive sense to retain the images that are impressed as a seal leaves its form in wax. Memory in this case is an operation of the soul specifically ordered to the body. There is also a function of the memory that is active while

²⁴ 11.2.5.

still being ordered to body, exemplified in the parallel trinity of conscious thought about things sensed.

This image you get when the consciousness thinks about the look of some body it has seen, does in fact consist both of the body's likeness held in the memory and that which is formed from it in the conscious attention as you actually recall something; and yet in appearance there is only one single image, and it takes a judgment of reason to discover two things here.... The coincidence of the two images, namely the one held in the memory and the one off-printed from it to form the attention in the act of recall, makes them appear as one because they are so exactly alike.²⁵

Again, this passage introduces a distinction similar to that found in Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia*, between a referential and a non-referential image that exists for thought. Augustine maintains that the image that is actually being considered (the non-referential image) ceases to exist when the mind turns to something else; the (referential) image that is held in the passive memory abides. Memory in its dual function guarantees both permanence and epistemic flexibility. This lends to knowledge the illusion of an infinite *capax*: hence Augustine laments in *conf.* 10 that he cannot possibly contain in discursive reflection the infinite potency of his memory.²⁶ But this *vis* is in fact only potential, and corresponds in actuality to a finite number of objects, and therefore a finite number of referential images.

The conscious attention cannot look at everything contained in the memory at one glance, and so trinities of thoughts follow one another in succession, and one gets this innumerably numerous trinity. It is not however an infinite one if it does not exceed the number of things stowed away in the memory. After all, from the moment a person begins to sense bodies with any of his bodily senses, they add up to a definite and determinate number, though an innumerable one, even if you add the

²⁵ 11.3.6. "*Sic illa phantasia, cum animus cogitat speciem visi corporis, cum constet ex corporis similitudine quam memoria tenet, et ex ea quae inde formatur in acie recordantis animi; tamen sic una et singularis apparet, ut duo quaedam esse non inveniuntur nisi iudicante ratione.... Sed utriusque coniunctio, id est, eius quam memoria tenet, et eius quae inde exprimitur ut formetur acies recordantis, quia simillimae sunt, veluti unam facit apparere.*"

²⁶ *Conf.* 10.8.15. "*Magna ista vis memoria.... Et vis est haec animi mei atque ad meam naturam pertinet, nec ego ipse capio totum, quod sum. Ergo animus ad habendum se ipsum angustus est.*"

things he has forgotten. It is not only infinite numbers that we call innumerable, but also finite ones that exceed our capacity to count.²⁷

What seems an infinite is in fact a finite multiplicity. It is reason with respect to non-referential images that brings order and meaning to this multiplicity of impressions. By introducing these distinctions, Augustine, like Plotinus before him, succeeds in describing sense-perception as something that is not merely passive. External objects act on the senses only insofar as the senses are themselves rendered active. Things sensed are stored up in the memory in a passive, sometimes unconscious, manner, but they exist for the mind only as actively recollected. This offers a more detailed account of what is suggested in early writings such as *ord.*, namely, that soul is a mediating principle that orders the sensible by means of memory *even* in the case of present perception. The example offered here of psychic causation is that of dreams: Augustine marvels at the ability of soul to affect and move the body through the active imagination. For Augustine, this example is a negative, but it points to the positive relationship that ought to exist between imagination and body, in which each aspect of the soul is subordinated to its higher principle.²⁸

Even as memory is the means for mediating order to the sensible, it serves as a limit, or *modus*, upon the *vis* of the intellectual soul.

Thus it happens that everyone who thinks about bodily things, whether he makes them up himself or hears or reads someone else describing past events or forecasting future ones, has to have recourse to his memory and there bring to light the limits and measure of all the forms which he looks

²⁷ *Trin.* 11.7.12. “*Sed quoniam non potest acies animi simul omnia quae memoria tenet, uno aspectu contueri, alternant vicissim cedendo ac succedendo trinitates cogitationum, atque ita fit ista innumerabiliter numerosissima trinitas: nec tamen infinita, si numerus in memoria reconditarum rerum non excedatur. Ex quo enim coepit unusquisque sentire corpora quolibet corporis sensu, etiam si posset adiungere quorum oblitus est, certus ac determinatus profecto numerus foret, quamvis innumerabilis. Dicimus enim innumerabilia, non solum infinita, sed etiam quae ita finita sunt, ut facultatem numerantis excedant.*”

²⁸ Our analysis of the text that follows bears out this interpretation; admittedly, given the reality of sin for Augustine, the issue is more complex. We shall return to this question in the conclusion.

at in his thoughts. It is simply impossible for anyone to think about a colour or shape he has never seen, a sound he has never heard, a flavour he has never tasted, a smell he has never smelled, or a feel of a body he has never felt. But the reason why no one can think about anything bodily unless he has sensed it is that no one remembers anything bodily unless he has sensed it. So the limits of thinking are set by the memory just as the limits of sensing are set by bodies.²⁹

But here of course Augustine is speaking only of the “sight of the mind” with respect to sensible things. What of non-sensible things? The epistemological analysis in subsequent books is not pursued with this kind of detail. Augustine has previously explained, at 8.6.9, that the mind knows “justice” in the particular instance of a just man; justice is the attribute of a soul, and it is seen through certain signs manifested in bodily actions, even linguistic signs. The mind recognizes “justice”, however, not because it has learned something through these signs that it did not previously know: hence the ambiguity between the order of knowledge and the order of learning familiar from *mag*. The mind rather recognizes “through” physical signs because it knows the same through the form of “justice” that is present to the mind. In the order of learning, the sensible serves the bringing to light of knowledge. The reasons already present to the mind are duly credited in Book 14 as the cause of knowledge of intelligible objects. But there is no active understanding of what constitutes justice before the acquaintance of a just man is made.³⁰

²⁹ 11.8.14. “*Ita fit ut omnis qui corporalia cogitat, sive ipse aliquid confingat, sive audiat, aut legat vel praeterita narrantem, vel futura praenuntiantem, ad memoriam suam recurat, et ibi reperiat modum atque mensuram omnium formarum quas cogitans intuetur. Nam neque colorem quem nunquam vidit, neque figuram corporis, nec sonum quem nunquam audivit, nec saporem quem nunquam gustavit, nec odorem quem nunquam olfecit, nec ullam contrectationem corporis quam nunquam sensit, potest quisquam omnino cogitare. At si propterea nemo aliquid corporale cogitat nisi quod sensit, quia nemo meminit corporale aliquid nisi quod sensit, sicut in corporibus sentiendi, sic in memoria est cogitandi modus.*”

³⁰ Or else an unjust person, upon which basis the concept of a just person might be negatively imagined.

The important point there, as here, is not ultimately a question of how a form might be abstracted from a particular thing or instance; rather, the issue of significance is the pedagogical emphasis upon will or love. The forms, as higher principles present to the mind but not identical to the mind, should be “cleaved to” and loved to the end of becoming as much like them as possible. Here, Augustine observes that it is the will that joins the mind to sensible things by means of active recollection. Thus the “direction” of the mind’s gaze reveals the object of its love. The “exercise” of this book intends to show the reader that the will does indeed encompass and rule the life of the body, and that through memory in its active capacity, mind can subordinate the life of the body to its true *ordo*. The end of this is not, as we shall see more clearly below, a rejection of the life of the body, but rather a proper submission, a peaceful *modus*. The result of this is a studied disinterest in the things that pertain to the body, as contrasted with a pre-occupation in these things falsely conceived as ends in themselves.

Just as it is the will which fastens sense to body, so it is the will which fastens memory to sense and the thinking attention to memory. And what fastens them together and assembles them also unfastens and separates them, namely the will again.... Memory is averted from sensation by the will when, intent on something else, it does not allow it to fix itself on what is present to it. The way the will averts the conscious attention from what is in the memory is simply by not thinking about it.³¹

Books 12-14: an incarnational model of unity

These books introduce a crucial development in Augustine’s method. Consider *conf.* 10, in which Augustine passes in ascending stages through the

³¹ 11.8.15. “*Voluntas porro sicut adiungit sensum corpori, sic memoriam sensui, sic cogitantis aciem memoriae. Quae autem conciliat ista atque coniungit, ipsa etiam disiungit ac separat, id est, voluntas.... Memoriam vero a sensu voluntas avertit, cum in aliud intenta non ei sinit inhaerere praesentia. Iam porro ab eo quod in memoria est, animi aciem velle avertere, nihil est aliud quam non inde cogitare.*”

various operations of soul: sense-perception, memory, the *affectiones*, speculative knowledge, and finally, to what stands “above” the soul. A reader of *trin.* 11 might expect the argument in subsequent books to follow a similar pattern; indeed, the twelfth book begins by saying that we have finished considering the soul with respect to *exteriora*, things perceived and understood through the senses, and that being exercised in these matters, we may now proceed to *interiora*. The distinction between these “realms” becomes less meaningful as far as the overall argument is concerned. Augustine here considers the soul in general as engaged in particulars kinds of acts, and therefore as related to different sorts of objects with different qualities of affections. What is important for our study is the acknowledgement that the realm of the temporal cannot, in this endeavour, be surpassed: in this limited sense, Cavadini is entirely correct in saying that the task of these books, conceived negatively as an “ascent”, is doomed to failure.³² We will develop this observation below.

The realm of the temporal naturally includes the sensible, but it must now be more broadly conceived. We therefore have a new dichotomy with which to work, summarized in these books by a variety of terms:

temporal — *scientia* — *actio* — *exsecutio* — *appetitus rationalis*

eternal — *sapientia* — *intellectum* — *consilium* — *ratio*

³² John Cavadini, “The structure and intention of Augustine’s *De trinitate*” in *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), pp. 103-123. I only disagree with Cavadini to the extent that he finds a deliberate anti-Neoplatonic polemic in this argument. I am not suggesting that the inner/outer distinction is rejected, but that it loses significant explanatory power in these books. At 10.13, Augustine identifies the “inner” as being the place where reason *begins*; its realm is less easily circumscribed, less frankly dualistic.

Wisdom consists in the contemplation of eternal things, most fully experienced in the soul's eternal presence to God. It is the mind's relation to what is unlike the mind: the object of wisdom is what is unchanging, and hence the mind at best can attain a fleeting "transitory thought about a non-transitory thing."³³ Books 12-14 are concerned more with defining *scientia*, with understanding how man can be at once ordered intellectually to contemplation, yet given over to the management of temporal affairs. The distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* is therefore introduced in order to explain how the soul is changeable and yet possessed of a certain stability, because of and despite its embodied life.

Temporal affairs are a proper subject matter for the mind. As we have seen, in both present perception and in the active aspect of memory ("active recollection"), the mind is fully involved in a judging capacity. *Scientia* takes up this practical dimension from the perspective of mind in itself: while expressing the changeable nature of mind, *scientia* must also manifest the order of higher principles—hence the recurring use of the term *modus*. If *sapientia* finds the mind in union with the eternal reasons, *scientia* is the demonstration *in actu* of the mind's attention to these same principles. These are not two parts, nor two faculties, of the mind; they are rather two different kinds of activities: the mind as it looks to what is "higher", and the mind as it looks to what is "lower." When considering the mind "in act", Augustine sees the soul as a work in progress. The soul grows, increasing in wisdom, through the exercise of practical wisdom. The ideal state of the mind reveals a harmonious marriage of *scientia* and *sapientia*: the mind wholly and perfectly in remembrance of higher principles to which it is

³³ 12.14.23.

“subjoined”³⁴, and communicating this mindfulness in its embodied, temporal life. Hence the practical dimension of these books: to bring the reader to see a way in which this marriage can be enabled, and the alienating effects of the fallen life overcome.

On the theme of marriage, Augustine famously compares the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* to Pauline theorizing upon the distinction between man and woman. They are equal in that they are identical in their essential nature; but they are unequal in that they are given to distinct sorts of tasks.³⁵ Both are necessary and both are good, but they are associated with different mediate ends. This book is helpfully read alongside not only *ciu.* 11-13 on the fall of man, but also *doctr. chr.* and its distinction between things that are to be enjoyed as ends in themselves, and things that are to be employed or ordered to final goods. Augustine explains at *doctr. chr.* 1.3-5 that God the Trinity is the thing that is to be enjoyed: this is the blessedness of participation in the divine life. Everything other than God—namely, the whole creation—is a means to this end. Error, or sin, occurs when things other than God are confusedly taken to be things worthy of ultimate enjoyment: in this case, they become idols rather than divine instruments. *Scientia* in *trin.* sees the created order as something good, but whose goodness lies in its being ordered to wisdom. The created order is not devalued as a mere tool, but rather finds its value as an *ordo amoris*, a “way of the affections”, humbly gesturing to its creator.³⁶

³⁴ 12.15.24; “*subiuncta*.”

³⁵ 12.5.5-13.21. Augustine defends the essential equality of woman and man; for one article that summarizes various scholarly approaches to reading this part of *trin.*, see David Vincent Meconi, “Gender and *Imago Dei* in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* XII”, in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2000), pp. 47-62.

³⁶ *Doctr. chr.* 1.17, as translated by D.W. Robertson (Liberal Arts Press: Indianapolis, 1958). In this text, as in *trin.*, the psychological emphasis is upon love—its quality as formed by its orientation.

An important aspect of the marital image of *scientia* and *sapientia* is the idea of sin as a failure of community. This is amply developed in the account of the fall in *ciu.*, and it is summarily described in Book 12 of *trin.* It also recalls suggestively the developing ecclesiology in the final books of *conf.* Augustine offers this succinct description at 8.14:

What happens is that the soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all into the part which is its own private property. By following God's directions and being perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws; and because there is nothing more than the whole it is thrust into anxiety over a part, and so by being greedy for more it gets less. That is why greed is called the root of all evils.³⁷

Sin is in part a fatal misunderstanding that arises from an attempt to render a common good shared as a private good possessed.³⁸ The disharmony between the spouses begins, in *ciu.* 11, when Eve enters into *secret* communication with the serpent; after they eat, both Adam and Eve hide from the friendly conversation they previously enjoyed with God. *Scientia* fails when it turns to the temporal realm in a manner independent from the influence of the principles that guide and illuminate natural reason. Adam represents the grounding that temporal affairs must have in the eternal. It is this grounding that is "public" and "common to all." Man enjoys the most perfect fellowship with man in his spiritual nature: recall in *conf.* 12 that the *caelum caeli* is described as the first "intellectual creature", the *sapientia Dei*. Augustine's discussion of Christian community in that book points

³⁷ *Trin.* 12.8.14. "Potestatem quippe suam diligens anima, a communi universo ad privatam partem prolabitur: et apostatica illa superbia, quod 'initium peccati' dicitur, cum in universitate creaturae Deum rectorem secuta, legibus eius optime gubernari potuisset, plus aliquid universo appetens, atque id sua lege gubernare molita, quia nihil est amplius universitate, in curam partilem truditur, et sic aliquid amplius concupiscendo minuitur; unde et avaritia dicitur 'radix omnium malorum'."

³⁸ Paul Griffiths develops the private/public dichotomy of sin nicely in *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity* (Brazos Press: Grand Rapids, 2004), esp. pp. 85-100.

to the heaven of heavens as the Church in glory. In the stability of contemplation, man finds a perfect union with his fellow man even as he is incorporated in Christ. The "private" is not the bodily or "exterior" as such, but rather the particularity of an illusory independence that arises from a "grasping" attempt to make what is already one's own into something possessed exclusively, as an end in itself and as a thing controlled by oneself. In the analogy of the marriage of Adam and Eve, *scientia* and *sapientia* now exist in a necessary but flawed community. A healthy community arises from humble submission of the lower to the higher according to a true *modus*.

The twelfth book concludes with a short discussion of what Augustine calls Platonic reminiscence. This appears to be a defense of Augustine's own use of the term "recollection" (*reminiscentia*), and in fact he only repudiates bodily re-incarnation as an implication of *anamnesis*.³⁹ In this book, Augustine has said that he is distinguishing between *scientia* and *sapientia* before proceeding to discuss them each in turn. In considering their difference and relation, he finds a link in memory. It appears as though wisdom cannot be attained by the embodied soul. The mind cannot behold unchanging truth in itself; however, it can have an apprehension that is unlike the thing apprehended, a "transitory thought of a non-transitory thing." This transitory thought is immediately lost to the sight of the mind; memory, however, "grafts" the experience of apprehension in the mind, establishing a dialectical link. Subsequently the mind, made more able in its

³⁹ I take the matter of the pre-existence of the soul, as proposed by O'Connell, to be closed; cf. O'Daly (1987), pp. 200-201.

powers by training in the *disciplinae*, can return through the memory to the thing perceived.⁴⁰

This confirms our previous interpretation: unchanging things such as the “eternal reasons” are known only through the mediation of some sort of image, whether spatial, linguistic or otherwise. These images are the tools used by the *magister* in order to turn the mind to the light that illumines it.⁴¹ In *trin.*, the mind encounters intelligible things—and not only sensible things—through the mediation of memory in that it apprehends universal truths only through particular instances. In habitual recollection, the mind is exercised in the discernment of the eternal in and through particular perceptions. Augustine offers a mathematical example of this limited mode of knowing: “the non-bodily and unchanging idea of a square body, for example, may abide for ever the same; but a man’s thought does not abide in it in the same way, if that is to say he could ever attain to it without a spatial image.”⁴²

There are therefore two aspects to the mind’s knowing. On the one hand, it is “naturally subjoined” to the intelligible reasons with the result that mind “sees” things by virtue of the illumination of a “non-bodily light”; on the other hand, by virtue of its unlikeness to these reasons, the mind must consciously and actively cultivate the habit of remembrance in the hope that, by “cleaving” to these reasons, it will become like them, more constant and stable by imitation. This is the paradox of the *caelum caeli* that Augustine is seeking after: the changeable creature participating as much as possible in the unchanging divine

⁴⁰ Recall the language of synthesis and analysis from *ord.* 2.19.48. Here, we have a more imagistic, epic play upon the same pattern.

⁴¹ The passage we quoted at length from *sol.* 1.13.23 suggests that the mind, in order to turn to this light, requires only faith, hope and charity—if this mind is “*sanus*”; if further help is required, a teacher must direct the mind to the discernment of the creative hand of God in all things.

⁴² 12.14.23.

life. The *scientia/sapientia* dichotomy assures us that this is not accomplished by a denial of the temporal, but rather by engaging it in a manner befitting its transitory and impermanent nature. As a matter of present perception, the habit of memory describes what this engagement should look like; its fulfillment is of course wholly eschatological. This reading is initially confirmed by the thirteenth and fourteenth books.

Having distinguished between *scientia* and *sapientia*, Augustine proceeds to discuss each in turn. The thirteenth book seeks to discern a trinitarian image in the “rational cognizance of temporal things” (*scientia*) and presumably the fourteenth will discuss the contemplation of eternal things, in which a trinity will most perfectly be found. Two observations should be made which we will consider in turn: first, the discussion of *scientia* becomes a discussion of faith in the incarnate Christ; second, despite the promise to attain wisdom, both in argument and *exercitatio*, we never in fact move beyond the realm of *scientia* (conceived precisely as faith). This is not a surprise given what we have read thus far; it does however speak against most readings of *trin.* which find in it something like an apophatic ascent that rejects in turn what it affirms in the quest for a “speculative” sort of union with God.⁴³

⁴³ To speak in this manner is misleading; Augustine has been accused of various sorts of “onto-theological” techniques, but this is based on a misreading of texts such as *trin.*, and a failure to appreciate his rich conception of image and memory, as well as the Christological core of his epistemology. On the one hand, Augustine resists attributing being (*substantia*; cf. *Gn. litt.* 5.16.34: “*ineffabilis substantia*”) to God except in the sense of existence (“*abusive vocari...*”; *trin.* 7.5.10); on the other hand, the fact that the soul is *subjoined* to the eternal reasons and remains perpetually distinct from them highlights the role of grace and illumination in the life of the resurrected body. For one recent example of Augustine as epistemological idolator, see David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2004), who summarizes at p. 265 that, for Augustine, God “is simple; He is intrinsically intelligible”; and the alleged downfall of Western theological speculation follows from this.

The thirteenth book echoes the fourth.⁴⁴ At 13.19.24, Augustine observes that the focal point of the union of *scientia* and *sapientia* is “that most important temporal event”, namely, the joining of God with man in time. At 4.18.24, Augustine says that the whole point of faith is that man actually be healed through his experience of temporal things. Faith is thus specifically faith in God as *incarnate*: like man in every way, except without sin.⁴⁵

Faith is not an intellectual assent, but a mode of actual, and not merely eschatological, participation in the union of temporal and eternal that is in Christ. If anything, the curious question is why Augustine has waited until the thirteenth book (in the context of 8-15) to discuss faith so explicitly. At this point, we will only observe, along with Ayres, that 13 centers the discussion of 12-14, since faith in Christ incarnate both unifies *scientia* and *sapientia*, and gives access to *sapientia* by a participation in this union. The purposes of argument and *exercitatio* come together most clearly here. The argument by proceeding through trinitarian tropes continues, but is subordinated to the incarnational model of *scientia* and *sapientia*: not only is the former on its own overly abstract, but at this point Augustine is offering an important qualification of the ascensional pattern of *exteriora-interiora-superiora*. The exterior, temporal realm dimly reflects an *ordo* or *modus* in Book 11; here, in light of the Incarnation, it reveals divine presence in a concrete manner. Augustine, by discussing faith, intends to show how this presence is manifested in the soul that seeks to enjoy the life of the community of the Trinity. Augustine has said up to this point that he must move

⁴⁴ On the significance of the relationship between these books, see Lewis Ayres’ article, “The Christological Context of Augustine’s *De trinitate* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII-XV”, in *Augustinian Studies* 29:1 (1998), pp. 111-139.

⁴⁵ That is to say, without any disharmonious relation between *scientia* and *sapientia* in his person, but rather embodying their perfect marriage; cf. 13.19.24.

beyond what is temporal, bodily, external, in order to find the highest part of man, since this alone is fit for enjoyment. Faith in Christ calls this into question—hence the significant shift in the argument at the beginning of Book 14.

In the opening chapters of Book 14, Augustine begins to criticize any sort of trinitarian image based upon faith, since faith depends on historical knowledge and implies a progress made in time.⁴⁶ The image of God, he says, must be located in that which does not pass away. Even if we distinguish between particular tenets of faith, and the act of faithfulness on the part of the believing soul, it seems that even the latter is bound to pass away in the fulfillment of contemplative *caritas*.

Augustine immediately calls this into question: perhaps, he says, much as memory contains a trace of a thing even after it has passed away, faith might abide even as it passes away.⁴⁷ Augustine compares faith to the virtues.⁴⁸ He observes that these not only abide, but are perfected in the fulfillment of happiness. The virtues chart out a seamless progress of spiritual perfection in which the soul is ever more rightly ordered to God.⁴⁹ Perhaps faith abides in a manner comparable to the exercise of the virtues: the progress is complete, but the memory of that progress is part of the obtaining of the desired end.

Augustine explores this possibility by returning to the psychological trinity that is founded in memory. The fact that memory and knowledge are distinct confirms the discursive mode of the mind's apprehension. The mind, we have

⁴⁶ Cf. 13.2.5.

⁴⁷ 14.8.11.

⁴⁸ 14.9.12.

⁴⁹ Cf. *mus.* 15.50-51, where the virtues work together to order the soul rightly to God and to creation; there they are based upon prudence, by which the soul "knows its proper station"; by justice, the soul is made duly subject to God, and mindful of its natural superiority to material things. In *trin.*, as in *mus.*, Augustine is using the virtues to trace out the activity of grace in the soul; a proper esteem of self on its own cannot offer any sort of felicity.

seen, knows intellectual objects mediately, through the production of an internal word. The mind can be present to itself, but only in the same manner in which it knows other things. Mind as object coincides with the thinking activity of mind, but strictly speaking, it is posterior in time (as object).⁵⁰ When the mind is not actively thinking about itself, its relation to itself is a function of memory, in the passive sense of a “storehouse.” It is only potentially an object of knowledge. Augustine defends the role of memory in self-knowledge; however, memory functions in a special manner in this case because, in joining together two things that are the same in kind, it functions most purely as a mode of making-present. It is, in the well-integrated soul, a union of love. Mind and its thinking are joined together in the act of self-knowing; that this relation is described as “love” preserves the otherness of subject and object. Self-knowledge is not transcendental even in this relation. It is discursive, since dialectical.

Augustine explicitly says that we cannot proceed any “higher”, indeed, that there is nowhere else to look in man for that capacity to image God.⁵¹ Memory reveals the discursive, time-bound character of the knowing subject; it also circumscribes the most intimate self-presence possible. Self-knowledge is not immediate, since mind depends on memory to make things “adventitious” to

⁵⁰ 14.10.13. Cf. 14.5.8, where Augustine observes that the mind, in knowing itself, only has in view what it is actually thinking. The discussion of memory in *conf.* 10 shows that mind cannot contain itself in its potency.

⁵¹ 14.10.13. “[It is not] as though after getting to know itself, it should by recollection see itself fixed in its own memory, as if it had not been there before it had got to know itself. The truth of course is that from the moment it began to be it never stopped remembering itself, never stopped understanding itself, never stopped loving itself, as we have already shown. And therefore *when* it turns to itself in thought, a trinity is formed in which a word too can be perceived. It is formed of course out of the very act of thought, with the will joining the two together. It is here then more than anywhere that we should recognize the image we are looking for” (italics mine). “*Aut post cognitionem sui recordando se ipsam velut in memoria sua constitutam videt, quasi non ibi fuerit antequam se ipsam cognosceret; cum profecto ex quo esse coepit, nunquam sui meminisse, nunquam se intelligere, nunquam se amare destiterit, sicut iam ostendimus. Ac per hoc quando ad se ipsam cogitatione convertitur, fit trinitas, in qua iam et verbum possit intelligi: formatur quippe ex ipsa cogitatione, voluntate utrumque iungente. Ibi ergo magis agnoscenda est imago quam quaerimus.*”

the mind. Self-knowledge is a thing to be sought after as a habitual *exercitatio*, and it is merely enabled (and not guaranteed) by a pre-conscious self-relation.⁵² In the likeness of mind seeking to know its thinking, Augustine finds the greatest likeness in man to God; but it is not the image of God itself. In the deliberate act of self-knowledge, the mind is made more like itself, but as self-oriented, *it is yet changeable*. The solution is to combine the insight of memory as a means of presence, with the eternity of the divine life as ground for the soul's steadfast well-being. The argument in 14 therefore shifts focus from seeking a divine likeness in man, to finding an anchor for man in a relation to the divine life. It is in remembering, knowing and loving God, Augustine says, that we most rightly find the image of God in man, for there is only one wisdom, one happiness and one "supreme light", and in these alone will the soul find rest.⁵³ For the mind to remember and know itself is "foolishness"; to remember and know God is wisdom, and blessedness.

It is somewhat disingenuous for Augustine to say that he has been considering up to now the soul as it exists prior to any reference to God (*antequam particeps Dei*).⁵⁴ There is in the soul a kind of natural image, just as there is for Augustine a natural immortality; this image however is gravely disfigured. What is the substance of the flaw? There is always this tension in Augustine's thought: are the natural limitations of time-bound creatures simply inherent in their mode of being, or are they moral, bound up with the effects of

⁵² Hill's translation at 15.25 illustrates the distinction nicely, while avoiding the tricky language of "consciousness": "when [the mind] begins to think about something else it stops thinking about this, although it does not stop knowing it." Hence the possibility of self-knowledge always exists, if not the actuality. In Book 15, Augustine explains this as a function of man's being and knowing being substantially distinct, whereas in God they are identical.

⁵³ 14.12.15.

⁵⁴ 14.8.11.

sin? Is the trinity of memory, knowledge and love an “adequate” reflection of triune equality and relation when ordered to self-knowledge? With Augustine, we cannot say one or the other. He will never say, in rapprochement with Origen, that the state of nature is an effect of sin; on the other hand, the natural state of things has inscribed in its very essence a radical and not merely teleological dependence upon God. A habit of self-knowledge is attainable, but its result is “foolishness.”⁵⁵ The mind is most god-like when it is ordered to God in all of its faculties. There may well be a natural *imago Dei* inscribed in the soul *antequam particeps Dei*; but it is of little account except as a pointer, a *capax*, for the divine life that sustains and illuminates it. At the conclusion of the fourteenth book, Augustine reiterates that all rational creatures can discern the truth by the illumination of the eternal reasons; hence, they can infer the existence of God and certain of his attributes, such as justice and truth. And yet at par. 18, Augustine insists that the mind cannot love or “esteem” itself rightly, let alone love its neighbour rightly, unless it first love God. Knowledge cannot happen apart from an effective act of will. It is precisely the key insight of a “trinitarian psychology” that knowledge and will are inextricably interdependent: a man cannot will what he does not know, nor can he know that to which he is not directed.

The soul cannot exist at all “apart from” God, let alone flourish. As the soul becomes more ordered to God, the subtle boundary between nature and grace becomes even less tangible. Augustine says that to be close to God is to remember God.⁵⁶ More accurately, “closeness” to God is a function of remembering, knowing and willing God: in this case, the soul is ordered to God as

⁵⁵ On self-love, see Oliver O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self-Love in St. Augustine* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1980).

⁵⁶ 14.13.17.

object because end. Because of the unchanging character of the desired end, the result is a greater integration of the psychological powers of the soul. Imitative participation results in the perfection of the soul's natural potential.

The mind can indeed apprehend truth, but as Augustine shows in *conf.* 10, the same mind immediately despises truth, and instead chooses the falsehood that is more convenient to it. Experience proves to Augustine the truth of this reflection. The failure of the will is repaired by the love of God, and the fall of the intellect is reversed by the graceful illumination of the truth. Hope therefore exists precisely in the soul's changeable nature: it can progress from misery to happiness. Happiness will be the result of the soul being consumed with and ordered toward the stability of the divine life. Memory, intellect and will shall be unified in the unity of their object.

To return to the thirteenth book, it should be clear why the final word in a text that intends to better understand the triune God is faith. Faith is understood as a temporal ordering of the soul to eternal truth. It establishes a relationship of participation in the incarnate God who enters into the condition of changeable man, and "conferred his gifts" upon the same, thereby mysteriously bringing together what hitherto has been naturally opposed.⁵⁷ Lest the term "participation" seem overly vague, Augustine specifies this relation in the terms of the atonement. It is by justice, he says, that Christ overcomes death; he pays the debt of sin with his blood and thereby offers satisfaction. Subsequently, in rising from the dead, he demonstrates the power that he has in his person.⁵⁸ The result of the twofold action of death and resurrection is that men should marvel at the *humility* of this

⁵⁷ 13.10.13. For this reason, Augustine says that all who lack the mediator between the temporal and the eternal, inevitably fail to understand the nature of the eternal; cf. 13.19.24.

⁵⁸ 13.14.18. The language of the atonement is not the exclusive manner in which this participation is described. That it occurs at this point highlights the Christological center of this book.

justice. Christ's humility teaches the example of obedience, and inspires in the heart a love for the one who has condescended in the act of sacrifice.

The dichotomy of *scientia* and *sapientia* describes the union of temporal and eternal in Christ's person. *Scientia* is most properly understood as the life of faith: it is the temporal ordering of all things to the will of God. *Sapientia* is the wisdom of God himself. Both are contained in the twofold nature of Christ. Knowledge is Christ, and wisdom is Christ: hence, Augustine says, "through him we go to him", without ever departing from him.⁵⁹ The two cannot be collapsed, just as the human and divine in Christ cannot be confused. However, the human is perfected in submission to and mystical union with the divine—indeed, submission, in the sense of *humilitas*, is the sole condition of union. For this reason the *bodily* character of Christ's resurrection is central to Augustine's theological psychology.⁶⁰ Christ's human body is as it were a doorway; to enter into it offers insight into the manner of man's union with God, but the threshold is never left behind. Just as a perfection of obedience is achieved throughout Christ's ministry and death, so also in the spiritual life of men is there the possibility of a continuous progress through temporal trials to the rest of blessedness.

Has the argument then failed, if indeed we remain with faith? At the end of the thirteenth book, Augustine reminds the reader that the trinity based on faith is a trinity that pertains to the inner man, which is to say that it is properly speculative. It is in fact a kind of knowledge.⁶¹ Nevertheless, it is based on

⁵⁹ 13.19.24. Cf. Col. 2:1-3; G. Madec, "Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra: le principe de cohérence de la doctrine augustinienne", in *Recherches Augustiniennes*, Vol. 10 (1975), pp. 77-85. On the eucharistic dimension of this movement, see *Io. ev. tr.* 13.4.

⁶⁰ On the flesh of Christ, see G. Madec, *La Patrie et la Voie* (Desclée: Paris, 1989), pp. 170-177.

⁶¹ 13.3.6.

historical events and a historical progress. Psychologically speaking, it is based in memory, and therefore pertains to the temporal.⁶² The fourteenth book, we have shown, seeks to find what is “immortally inscribed” upon the soul. However, immortality in the end is found in God alone. The *capax* of memory is capable of including both a memory of past life (progress in faith), and a present perception of the divine (the graceful vision of God). This is an adequate rest for the embodied creature, whether in the midst of this life, or in the bodily vision of glory.

Conclusions on trin.: Book 15

We began this chapter by describing the Incarnation as a *via* to the Father, and as a principle of unification of the temporal and the eternal. Faith is the term that best describes the task of dwelling in the temporal: it is not simply the affirmation of certain statements as true, but rather a habit-forming activity whereby the soul comes to understand and love all things in their proper *ordo*, or their proper relation to God. This activity is primarily a work of mind, but the effect of faith is on the whole person. It is a healing that has its ultimate fulfillment in the resurrection of the body, described in Book 15 as a state of tranquility in which the body becomes a boon rather than a burden, perfectly subject to oneself even as the whole person is subject to God.⁶³ We wished to highlight the centrality of the Incarnation, even in a treatise on the Trinity, as the only certain link between the soul and the mystery of the life of the divine.

For this reason, we focused on the chapters concerned with the christological paradigm of *sapientia* and *scientia* as an essential development in

⁶² 13.20.25.

⁶³ 15.25.44.

the methodology of discerning evidence of the creator in the created. Augustine's argument can in no way be taken as merely negative in method. Instead of passing through the temporal in order to find the eternal in man, in the end Augustine concedes that the eternal is not meaningfully present "in" man *antequam particeps Dei*. As in other texts, Augustine observes a kind of natural immortality of the soul, as well as an illumination of reason that cannot be considered a direct intervention of grace. Augustine's preferred proof of the natural gifts with which man is endowed lies in the universal desire that all men have for happiness: Augustine returns to this argument throughout *trin.*, significantly at the conclusion of Book 14.⁶⁴

The focus on the creature thus shifts to a focus on the divine, specifically on its trinitarian inter-relations as a kind of *vita* into which the sacrifice of the incarnate Christ has purchased access. The final book accordingly develops two overarching themes. First, the undeniable unlikeness of man and God, given the changeable nature of the mind of the creature. Second, the work of the Spirit as overcoming the unlikeness—the unlikeness preserved even in the two distinct natures embodied in Christ.

The fifteenth book, we initially observed, claims to treat of the Trinity in itself, what Augustine has indeed been aiming for all along. After summarizing the argument thus far (as recapitulated above), it concludes that the image of God in man is so dramatically and fundamentally unlike the reflected exemplar that the Trinity remains enshrouded in mystery. This conclusion is not a great surprise to

⁶⁴ Those who argue against the necessity of faith for the fulfillment of happiness willfully ignore what their reason tells them, namely, the evident manner in which the soul is "made for God." Cf. 15.23.44. "By despising the faith that purifies hearts, what are they doing in understanding the nature of the human mind, with their subtle discussions about it, but condemning themselves on the very evidence of their own understanding?"

the reader. What we initially described as a failed enterprise is duly fulfilled in the *exercitatio* of faith.⁶⁵ Augustine summarizes as follows:

Our knowledge therefore is vastly dissimilar to [God's] knowledge. What is God's knowledge is also his wisdom, and what is his wisdom is also his being or substance, because in the wonderful simplicity of that nature it is not one thing to be wise, another to be, but being wise is the same as being, and we have already said often enough in previous books. But our knowledge, as regards most of its objects, can be both lost and acquired for the very reason that for us to be is not the same thing as to know or to be wise, since we can be, even if we do not know and are not wise to things we have learnt from elsewhere. That is why, just as our knowledge is so dissimilar to that knowledge of God's, so our word is dissimilar to that Word of God which is born of the Father's being.⁶⁶

God is identical with his wisdom and his knowledge: it is an attribute of his essential nature to be wise and to know. Man possesses this attribute not only in greater or lesser degrees, but in a fundamentally different manner (appropriate to his changeable nature).

It is true that man's memory... has in its own little way some sort of likeness in this image trinity to the Father, however immeasurably inadequate the likeness may be. Again, it is true that man's understanding, which is formed from memory by directing thought onto it when what is known is uttered, and which is an inner word of no particular language, has in its enormous inequality some kind of likeness to the Son; and that man's love, proceeding from knowledge and joining memory and understanding together, as being itself common to parent and offspring (which is why it cannot be itself regarded as either parent or offspring) has in this image some likeness, though a vastly unequal one, to the Holy Spirit. And yet, while in this image of the trinity these three *are* not one man but *belong to* one man, it is not likewise the case in that supreme

⁶⁵ I agree with Hill that the sense in which Augustine is addressing "unbelievers" has to do with those who require "reasons" in order to believe (15.27.48). Instead, Augustine commends faith, in a manner describing the methodology of the whole work: first, one must place faith in the truth of Scripture; then one must pray and seek to live rightly, and by this seek to understand what they hold by faith.

⁶⁶ 15.12.22. "*Longe est ergo huic scientiae scientia nostra dissimilis. Quae autem scientia Dei est, ipsa et sapientia; et quae sapientia, ipsa essentia sive substantia. Quia in illius naturae simplicitate mirabili, non est aliud sapere, aliud esse; sed quod est sapere, hoc est et esse, sicut et in superioribus libris saepe iam diximus. Nostra vero scientia in rebus plurimus propterea et amissibilis est et receptibilis, quia non hoc est nobis esse quod scire vel sapere: quoniam esse possumus, etiam si nesciamus, neque sapiamus ea quae aliunde didicimus. Propter hoc, sicut nostra scientia illi scientiae Dei, sic et nostrum verbum quod nascitur de nostra scientia, dissimile est illi Verbo Dei quod natum est de Patris essentia.*"

trinity of which this is the image that those three belong to one God: they are one God and they are three persons, not one.⁶⁷

We have not described memory or the will merely as faculties: they are essential activities of the soul. But man is not identical to them, nor is he identical to his mind. Accordingly, they cannot really be equal in themselves, except insofar as they meet in an object of contemplation (such as the mind itself, which nevertheless remains distinct as object). The image trinity of self-knowledge seemed to promise the most hope for discerning such a capacity in man, but Augustine found that mind only *actually* knows itself in discursive acts of knowledge, through the mediation of the production of an internal word. Man is most like God when he has God before his eyes, filling up all the potency of the soul with himself.

What is different then in the final contemplation that is promised to man? What is to be hoped for? In the vision of glory, says Augustine, the whole person “shall see all his knowledge in one glance.”⁶⁸ Mind does not cease to be what it is and know as it ordinarily does; and yet it is changed as its object changes. The sight of the mind that passes over one object after another pauses, and finds itself immovably held by beauty of the divine. What is changeable is not made

⁶⁷ 15.23.43. “*Quamvis enim memoria hominis, et maxime illa quam pecora non habent, id est, qua res intelligibiles ita continentur, ut non in eam per sensus corporis venerint, habeat pro modulo suo in hac imagine Trinitatis incomparabiliter quidem imparem, sed tamen quaecumque similitudine Patris; itemque intelligentia hominis, quae per intentionem cogitationis inde formatur, quando quod scitur dicitur, et nullius linguae cordis verbum est, habeat in sua magna disparitate nonnullam similitudinem Filii; et amor hominis de scientia procedens, et memoriam intelligentiamque coniungens, tanquam parenti prolique communis, unde nec parens intelligitur esse, nec proles, habeat in hac imagine aliquam, licet valde imparem, similitudinem Spiritus sancti: non tamen, sicut in ista imagine Trinitatis non haec tria unus homo, sed unius hominis sunt, ita in ipsa summa Trinitate cuius haec imago est, unius Dei sunt illa tria, sed unus Deus est, et tres sunt illae, non una persona.*”

⁶⁸ 15.16.26. “*Fortassis etiam volubiles non erunt nostrae cogitationes ab aliis in alia euntes atque redeuntes, sed omnem scientiam nostram uno simul conspectu videbimus: tamen cum et hoc fuerit, si et hoc fuerit, formata erit creatura quae formabilis fuit, ut nihil iam desit eius formae, ad quam pervenire deberet: sed tamen coaequanda non erit illi simplicitati, ubi non formabile aliquid formatum vel reformatum est, sed forma; neque informis, neque formate, ipsa ibi aeterna est immutabilisque substantia.*”

unchangeable, but is rather filled with God, and so satisfied in its restlessness.

Augustine describes this as a fulfillment of form whereby what has not yet attained the stature of what it was made to be, is made complete. It is what is promised to Augustine in the *caelum caeli* of *conf.* 12: the completion of the *formatio* begun by the Holy Spirit in the first moment of creation, the “movement over the depths” of formless matter. The variable will is fixed (“*se tener*”) by grace in a relationship of adoration, and the whole heart (“*in affectu toto*”) is “filled” with God.⁶⁹ Augustine describes this relationship as an intimacy, or “cleaving to.”

As in Books 12 and 13 of *conf.*, the unlikeness of creature and creator is immediately qualified by a consideration of how the Holy Spirit overcomes the same. It is for this reason that, in *trin.* 15, Augustine first compares the unlikeness of man’s soul to Father and Son, and subsequently wonders as to the appropriateness of naming the Holy Spirit by the term of “love”.⁷⁰ The Spirit is described as the mutual relationship between the Father and the Son: it is the activity of love that delineates the otherness of their persons, and the intimacy of their “life” together.

If there is nothing greater than [love] among God’s gifts, and if there is no greater gift of God’s than the Holy Spirit, what must we conclude but that he is this charity which is called both God and from God? And if the charity by which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father inexpressibly shows forth the communion of them both, what more suitable than he who is the common Spirit of them both should be distinctively called charity?⁷¹

⁶⁹ *Conf.* 12.11.12. It is no violation of nature for a thing to be fulfilled in its form by the activity of a higher principle: it is a concept obvious to a Neoplatonist, Christian or pagan, whether the creative influence is understood to be mediated or unmediated. By way of example, see Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, Book 3, Chs.16-22. on God as both the participated being of all things, and as providential final cause.

⁷⁰ *Trin.* 15.17.27, ff. Here we find the explicit echo and conclusion to Books 8-9, which describe (cf. *supra*) love as a principle of unification, a kind of “life” that unites lover and beloved.

⁷¹ 15.19.37. “*Deinde, si in donis Dei nihil maius est caritate, et nullum est maius donum Dei quam Spiritus sanctus, quid consequentius quam ut ipse sit caritas, qui dicitur et Deus et ex Deo? Et si*

The importance of the procession of the Spirit from the Son as well as the Father is highlighted at the conclusion to the book, in a long quotation from a sermon on the Gospel of John.

But the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father into the Son and then proceed from the Son to sanctify the creature. He proceeds simultaneously from them both, even though the Father gave the Son that the Spirit should proceed from him as he does from himself.⁷²

This language preserves a relational priority to the Father in the relationship between Father and Son, and yet it highlights the fundamental equality of the two in the mutuality of the procession of the Spirit. The love that is the Spirit is real enough in itself to be exemplified in the personhood of the Holy Spirit; it is nevertheless eclipsed, so to speak, in the intimacy with which it binds together Father and Son in “consubstantial communion.”⁷³ By “participation”, man is welcomed into this intimacy of Father and Son. The Spirit, “poured into our hearts” is that which “makes us abide in God and him in us.”⁷⁴ Faith “works by love”⁷⁵, meaning that it is realized, or fulfilled, in the activity of love. In Book 13, faith was specifically ordered to a theology of Christ’s bodily Incarnation; here, love as the gift of the Holy Spirit is the completion of what is begun by the bodily sacrifice of the Cross. Book 15 makes the picture complete: the work of the whole Trinity in time, in creation, is an exhaustive pedagogy of salvation.

caritas qua Pater diligit Filium, et Patrem diligit Filius, ineffabiliter communionem demonstrat amborum; quid convenientius quam ut ille dicatur caritas proprie, qui Spiritus est communis ambobus?”

⁷² *Io. eu. tr.* 99; *trin.* 15.27.48. “*Spiritus autem sanctus non de Patre procedit in Filium, et de Filio procedit ad sanctificandam creaturam; sed simul de utroque procedit: quamvis hoc Pater Filio dederit, ut quemadmodum de se, ita de illo quoque procedat.*” At 15.17.29, Augustine says that Holy Spirit proceeds from both, but that he “principally proceeds” from the Father (“*procedit principaliter*”).

⁷³ 15.27.49.

⁷⁴ 15.17.31.

⁷⁵ 15.18.32; Gal. 5:6.

In *conf.*, we found that memory had to be transformed from the distraction of bodily life into the fixed attention of *meditatio*. In *trin.*, the language of the theological virtues dominates, as is appropriate from the concluding emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. Augustine argues for the continuity of memory as the meaningfulness of bodily life. In the life of the resurrection body, faith is no longer necessary, but there is nevertheless a memory (a “trace”) of faith, just as there is a sort of memory of bodily life. Individual personhood abides in the vision of glory, and this personhood is summed up in the conception of memory as a link both to a personal history, and to a perpetual state of being anchored in the divine, triune life. This “individuality”, for lack of a richer term, is really the hallmark of the Christian narrative of resurrection. The “distraction” of earthly life gives way to the fixity of contemplation: but in this contemplation, the loves (*affectiones*) that charted the *via* of bodily life are not abandoned, but rather shape the distinctive character of that contemplation. The loss of self in the beholding of God is at once a finding of self, in that all of these loves are seen most fully in their proper order.

Augustine concludes *trin.* in prayer: he desires only to remember God, know God and love God. Memory, stretching out to “what is before”⁷⁶, is transformed into hope.

⁷⁶ *Conf.* 11.30.40.

CONCLUSION

In an article published in 1975, Goulven Madec writes: “il y a en revanche... peu de travaux qui analysent les ouvrages d’Augustin, ses procédés d’argumentation et de composition, le mouvement propre de son discours et de sa pensée.” This might seem on first reading an incredible claim, given the quantity of secondary literature on Augustine in circulation. His point is that a great deal of scholarship imports questions and problems foreign to Augustine’s texts and “esprit.”¹ This is manifestly true, and this dissertation takes its methodological cue from this observation. The concept of memory is not the most important aspect of Augustine’s anthropology, but it becomes foundational for Augustine, and the fact that he makes it the basis of the mind’s imaging of God is clearly original. This dissertation traces the emergence of memory within the context of the argument of particular texts: our method can be contrasted to that of G. O’Daly, who abstracts the philosophical categories that he considers from their *loci*.² In this, he lucidly interprets their sense, but without in turn bringing much new clarity to the texts themselves. In Augustine’s early writings (up to *mus.*), memory initially plays a circumscribed role, and the exploration of its full significance is explicitly deferred until *conf.* This work, along with *trin.*, gives the cosmological, and especially christological, context that exposes memory as a key element in the argument for the unity of man with the triune God.

¹ “*Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra*”, *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975), pp. 79. Madec is specifically concerned with an excessive pre-occupation with Augustine’s “sources”, the *libri Platoniorum* in particular, and the resulting ideological commitments that bring to Augustine’s texts an anachronistic opposition between philosophy and theology.

² For references, see Bibliography, and *infra*. Our approach therefore intends to contribute constructively to O’Daly’s work.

Madec rightly argues that the ontological dichotomy of time and eternity, and the corresponding epistemological dichotomy of *scientia* and *sapientia*, constitute *the* structure of Augustinian theology.³ Our interest in memory intersects with these dichotomies, and with their reconciliation in Christ.

The central place of memory demonstrates Augustine's commitment to the unity of man, and therefore the integral role of the body both in basic psychological functions and in the effort to attain wisdom: as a philosopher, Augustine is not a dualist in denial of the physical; as a thinker who privileges a theology of Christ's body, he cannot be. For Augustine, as for the ancients, memory reveals the ability of mind to apprehend order in the physical without being subject to it. In conjunction with the will, and the illumination of the intellect, memory is the intermediate through which the mind meets the world, with judgment and affection—intentionality, perhaps—meaning that the mind apprehends its objects in a complex manner, framed either by *caritas* or *cupiditas*. For Augustine, human knowing, and especially self-knowledge, does not purchase transcendence. The condition of memory describes a way in which the limitations and ordinary conditions of knowledge can become a *via*, linking the unstable mind to the unchanging truth.

Epistemological fact thus becomes a basis both for spiritual dilemma (in *conf.* 10 and 11), and christological resolution (in *conf.* 12 and 13, and *trin.* 12-14). The spiritual experience of life constrained by the discursiveness of memory compels Augustine to reflect upon the radical otherness of human knowing and experience, and the eternity of the divine life. This otherness is overcome specifically by the humility of the incarnation. This humility is shared in, both by

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

imitation, and by participation in Christ through his body—the church—the sacraments, and especially through the transformation of the mind in *meditatio* upon scripture.⁴

In the first part of this dissertation, we consider the problem that Plato has set up for himself with the theory of the forms: having rightly distinguished the realms of the intelligible and the sensible, how should they be re-connected? Plato writes in *Timaeus* (29b), that the “creator must have looked to the eternal, for the world is the fairest of creations and he is the best of causes. And having been created in this way, the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable.”⁵ If the sensible world reflects the orderliness of the intelligible, the latter must be knowable—albeit in a limited manner—through the sensible. The epistemological problem becomes the relationship between sense-perception and knowledge. In *Republic*, Plato wishes for recollection to explain the relationship between the mind and the forms. But knowledge in that text is not simply an ascent to the contemplation of the illuminating Sun, or the Truth; the Good, as it is also called, demands that the wise person “descend” again to the world as a citizen and teacher. The wise “dialectician” should not merely give an account of the essence of things, but also

⁴ On the church in *conf.*, Hans Urs von Balthasar writes that “it is surprising and yet logical that the personal time dialectic of the *Confessions* should be seen ultimately, *yet logically*, within the framework of a social and universal view of time. *Memoria* does not lead to the remembering of a prenatal existence in heaven... but to the heavenly *Civitas Dei*. It is the pivot of individual existence; to know this heavenly mother is to understand oneself. She is the unbroken unity of men with God, that unity which existed for a moment in Adam, before it was shattered by sin.” *A Theological Anthropology* (Sheed & Ward: New York, 1967), p. 33.

⁵ Trans. B. Jowett. The passage quoted immediately precedes 29c (“As being is to becoming, so is truth to belief.”), to which Augustine refers at both at *cons. eu.* 1.35.53, and *trin.* 4.18.24 (“*quantum ad id quod ortum est aeternitas valet, tantum ad fidem veritas*”). In both places, Augustine uses Plato to develop a sense of how the temporal is “related” to the eternal, both ontologically and as accounting for a dialectical theory of wisdom.

demonstrate proportion and order in his manner of living virtuously and courageously. In the later *Philebus*, the activity of dialectic is more complex, described not in terms of ascent and descent, but rather in terms of unity and plurality. Wisdom is an activity of seeking unity in all things, including the vagaries of embodied life. Memory takes on a new importance here in that not only must it account for an *a priori* link to first principles, but it also must be a means to universalize the data of sense-perception for the mind. Hence the sensible world is not an optional distraction for Plato, but rather one means through which the order of creation is beheld and enjoyed, and also an instrument by which it is taught to the community of the city. While Plato does not explicitly parallel micro and macrocosmic perspectives, the cosmological unity evident in *Timaeus* and *Symposium*, at least, is reflected in the ability of memory in *Philebus* to connect mind simultaneously to what is above and below it, hence moving Plato beyond a soul-body dualism with which he is frequently charged.

The commonplace that Aristotle offers a more “empirical” epistemology has some truth to it, but the picture of Plato that we have provided here suggests that the antagonism between Plato and Aristotle on these matters, still maintained by scholars of classical philosophy today, is overstated.⁶ An attention to their interpretive history offers a richer picture of Plato and Aristotle for students of patristics. In particular, it helps the student of Augustine to interpret the influence of Plotinus more contextually and circumspectly. Plotinus self-consciously distances himself from Aristotle even as he depends heavily on his psychology.

⁶ The history of the early Academy does not easily permit this reading, except when an ideological program is at stake. Scholars rightly observe that, from the 1st century CE on, interpreters are excessively focussed on showing how Aristotle and Plato are in harmony, with the result that a curriculum is put in place that begins with Aristotle’s logical works, and ends with Plato’s middle or late dialogues, such as *Parmenides*. Scholars are right in observing that this can result in strange readings of texts, but they are wrong in *de facto* dismissing the assumption of a certain doctrinal harmony because of this situation.

He does not however agree in grounding knowledge explicitly in the abstraction of intellectual forms from sensible things. We have detailed the divisions that arise within the soul, for Plotinus, as a consequence of this. Plotinus is clearly a significant inspiration for Augustine's attention to memory not merely as a faculty of the soul, but to the experience of the passage of time as a spiritual problematic. Nevertheless, the spirit of Augustine's texts on these questions is closer to Plato.⁷

This becomes clear in the second part, with an analysis of Augustine's Cassiciacum dialogues. While we have said that the classical, philosophical tradition is just one of several influences upon Augustine, these early texts show Augustine actively engaging with the tensions of this tradition in a sophisticated and theologically rigorous manner. In *ord.*, memory comes into play as the question is raised of what sense-perception has to do with wisdom. Wisdom is proposed as involving a conversion within, away from the senses, by means of the liberal arts. And yet, as Augustine and his interlocutors are confronted by creation as a fact, visually experiencing its beauty and orderliness, he reminds his reader that the *ratio* of creation must be evident to the senses. Augustine is convinced that the *ordo* perceived by the intellect, and the *ordo* perceived through the senses, are one as the creator is one. And yet, an ambiguity is present in the early works, for the *ordo* of the sensible is only apparent to one who "has his return to God in his heart." This is the same ambiguity that will abide throughout Augustine's writings; it is not a later development that arises as the result of a new pre-occupation with sin. A fully theological resolution is intimated in the economic activity of the Trinity. In *beata u.*, in a Stoic echo of *Philebus*, wisdom is described as a mean, a measured *prudentia*. It is a gift of the Son, the truth, who

⁷ On the decision to leave aside Stoic sources, see the introduction (*supra*).

descends from the *summus modus*, in order to dwell in the midst of men. The Spirit comprehends the “extremes” of human existence, and gathers them into the “highest measure”, the Father. Even in the Cassiciacum dialogues, the redemptive program of the Trinity is evident.

Within the time frame of the writing of these texts, a deep doctrinal consistency emerges, even as Augustine’s thought about the nature of the soul develops in a manner appropriate to his position in the Church, and the genre of his texts. It is true that, from *imm. an.* to *trin.*, Augustine continues to maintain that the soul possesses a kind of natural immortality proper to an intelligible substance. Nevertheless, he sharply distinguishes between human and divine mind, and associating truth in essence with the latter, commits himself to a view of mind as changeable.⁸ By *mus.*, however, he is nevertheless also committed to an anthropological picture which is fairly unified, in which memory plays a central role in the mediation between the intelligent and the sensate. The early dialogues connect Augustine’s struggle with epistemological questions with mature trinitarian and christological tropes. It is true, for example in the trinitarian activity of *beata u.* described above, that the connection is sketchy compared to what we have in *trin.* Nevertheless, the doctrinal content is consistent, nor does *retr.* detract from this.

Although memory is an emerging issue in the early writings, our argument is circumscribed by the explicit deferral of its careful examination. Up to *mus.*, memory reveals the ability of the mind to express and discern *ordo* in the whole

⁸ Mind is changeable because it can be destroyed, and because the acts and habits of mind are accidental to it. In Neoplatonic fashion, the mind comes to the fulfilment of its form only through the influence of the higher principle. It is truest to Augustine’s own language to understand this movement through the relationship between “image” and “likeness”; cf. R. Markus, “*Imago and similitudo in Augustine*”, *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 10 (1964), pp. 125-143.

creation, by its dual function of linking the mind to the intelligible reasons—although this aspect, precisely as a work of memory (as opposed to knowledge in general), is not yet developed—and opening the mind to the sensible world as something possessing an intrinsic *ordo*. *Mus.* confirms this interpretation, and deepens it by making memory into the moral filter, so to speak, through which the mind selectively chooses to attend to what is taken in through the senses, purging images that correspond to the ill-considered use of physical goods. Memory thus serves to order the soul with respect to what is lesser, and it does this by mediating a higher *ordo* that is perceived through the mind. Holiness, in *mus.*, is life “lived within the bounds of memory.”⁹

That the focus on the memory in *conf.* takes on a new character of gravity cannot therefore be attributed to any new fascination with sin.¹⁰ There may be a

⁹ *Mus.* 14.45. The function of imagination here is not merely utilitarian, dessicated; it retains its poietic function, but as submitted to the *ordo* of providence. The sense of “bounds” here points to the *continentia* of *conf.*

¹⁰ P. Cary nicely describes Augustine’s continuity in this regard, while pointing out that his later thinking about the epistemological effect of sin is more universal and social in scope. Even in the early dialogues, Augustine is ready to observe that the “training” needed by the soul is best described in terms of the Catholic faith (see our comments in Chapter 5 on *sol.* 1.13.23). Cary writes (in *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000), pp. 74–75): “To judge by the structure of the first book of the *Soliloquies*, where the treatment of intellectual vision culminates in a discussion of how to strengthen weak eyes, it seems the metaphor of dazzlement played a large role in attracting Augustine to the Platonist metaphor of intellectual vision in the first place. While the talk of intellectual vision provides apt metaphors for Augustine’s theory of knowledge and the splendid descriptions of the soul’s ultimate fulfilment, talk of weak, sick and dazzled eyes provides even more apt metaphors for Augustine’s morality and pedagogy: it suggests in all the right ways the obstacles preventing us from seeing God and how we are to overcome them. The obstacles are in ourselves: they are the ignorance, ill-health, and infirmity of our mind’s eye, for which we are to blame because of our love of temporal things. It is as if our bad habit of staring at dim figures in the darkness has weakened our eyes and made them susceptible to all kinds of disease and corruption. Later Augustine combines this account of the obstacles to salvation with the conception that human nature in general has suffered a kind of corruption. But in his early works the spotlight is on individual failure: each soul’s vices account for its own particular distance from beatitude, each soul’s carnal habits account for its own inability to bear the strong light of the intelligible Truth, and each soul’s lack of training explains why it has not yet developed the ability to see God.” I would want to qualify the phrase “see God”; if the term “training” rankles as inegalitarian, or even quasi-Pelagian, read this instead in terms of the exercise of faith, something that must be nurtured in order to grow and thrive. Experience bears out the truth of this, as is the case with the practice of the virtues. As Cary observes later (p. 75), the role of the *disciplinae* in this spiritual context seems an absurd account of what education might look like, but it is nevertheless “part and parcel of the peculiar unity of Augustine’s thought—the way he holds together reason and religion, epistemology and joy.”

greater appreciation of the implications, epistemological and theological, of the sacrifice of the God who enters into unity with creation—but even this appreciation is bound up with the autobiographical character of the narrative. Memory, in *conf.* 10, expresses the spiritual dilemma of the time-bound creature that has realized that its perfection, its peace, cannot logically be realized in the conditions of ordinary existence. Memory thus expresses a sense of abiding distraction and restlessness.¹¹ Past and future do not in reality exist, and the present is continuously impermanent, a mere becoming; memory makes that present available to the mind, but as an image, a sign, and not a thing. The fact that memory is necessary even for the perception of “present” objects becomes a negative. However, as expressing the limitations, the otherness, of man and God, memory opens up a fruitful space for spiritual renewal. There is an element of artful self-consciousness, again, appropriate to the autobiographical character of the text. “Late have I loved you, Beauty ancient and new”, Augustine cries.¹² His “lateness” to God is contrasted to the intimate presence of God to the soul. Our analysis of Book 11 shows that the discourse on the nature of time concludes with an even more cosmic sense of radical unlikeness: “when I shall be fully united with you, with all of myself? Then I shall never have pain or labour, and my whole life will be full of you.”¹³

In the early writings, memory is the locus of union and communication between soul and body, comparable to the role of imagination for Aristotle. The connection between the epistemological and ontological to which Madec alludes

¹¹ “Le temps est donc l’inquiétude du désir.” N. Grimaldi, *Le désir et le temps* (Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin: Paris, 1992), p. 240. At p. 247, Grimaldi quotes Bergson as finding that memory is the transcendence of the self, of the “esprit.”

¹² *Conf.* 10.27.38.

¹³ *Ibid.* 10.28.39.

depends upon the centrality of Augustine's christology to his thought, and more specifically upon a theology of Christ's *body*. In different but comparable ways, *conf.* and *trin.* demonstrate the implications of physical unification of the paradoxical elements of the temporal and eternal. In this union, the otherness of the creature is preserved, first in the dual nature of Christ, and second, in the diversity implied in Augustine's trinitarian formulations. In *conf.* 12, Christ brings man into union with himself first through the contemplation of Scripture, through which instrument the will is submitted to the truth, and the common memory of the church formed; second, through the community of the church itself, in which the peace of the *caelum caeli* is tasted in the submission to the shared (*non privata*) good of unity. In *trin.*, Christ brings man into union through the *reformatio* of the self that results from the exercise of faith. Faith here is conceived as a participation in Christ's body; "through him" Augustine says, "we go to him, *never departing from him*." This is a constant progress in the ordering of the affections through the right use of temporal goods, not complete in this life of memory, but nevertheless made more and more like the *intentio* of the heaven of heavens.

Memory is the basis for soul's progress in the world precisely because it can contain the dialectical play of knowledge and love. Neither of these can precede the other as the memory must.¹⁴ However, the fulfillment of memory in

¹⁴ R. Williams, "The paradoxes of self-knowledge in the *De trinitate*", J.T. Lienhard, *et al.* (eds.), *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine, Presbyter Factus Sum* (Peter Lang: New York, 1993), pp. 121-134. Williams begins to offer a critique of scholars who find Augustine to be proto-Hegelian, even Cartesian, in his theory of knowing; we have spoken in response to Booth and Matthews, and Williams addresses the approach of O'Daly and Mourant as well (n. 2). Williams finds these anachronistic readings to be inadequately theological, and inattentive to the trinitarian structure of consciousness. The mind knows itself in the activity of remembering, knowing and loving, and this knowing must therefore include, and even presuppose, a rightly ordered will. Williams only fails in not extending his critical analysis to include memory, and its importance in mediating the production of the inner *verbum*. Lewis Ayres (1995), likewise, does not consider the significance

the *intentio* of contemplation results from the will that is healed; and the healing of the will presupposes the mind being filled with truth. Memory as merely one aspect of the triune soul cannot have the final word.

The defining attribute of Augustine's theory of knowledge, to the extent that he has one, is humility.¹⁵ Memory can hold the mind together with what is known but not yet possessed, with what is desired but not yet perfectly loved. The progress of faith, for Augustine, finds this to be sufficient.

O Lord my God, my one hope, listen to me lest out of weariness I should stop wanting to seek you, but let me seek your face always, and with ardour. Do yourself give me strength to seek, having caused yourself to be found and having given me the hope of finding you more and more. Before you lies my strength and my weakness; preserve the one, heal the other. Before you lies my knowledge and my ignorance; where you have opened to me, received me as I come in; where you have shut to me, open as I knock. Let me remember you, let me understand you, let me love you. Increase these things in me until you refashion me entirely.¹⁶

of Augustine's preference for the image-trinity rooted in memory rather than in *mens* when he takes up Williams' position.

¹⁵ Humility motivates this model of spiritual progress, and not an abiding "skepticism", as Brian Stock maintains (1996, p. 278). There remains a current in scholarship, including those who find the birth of modern semiotics in Augustine, arguing that illumination, the presence of Christ as the inner teacher, and similar doctrines, drain signs, sacraments, or any external "things" of real signifiatory power. This dissertation argues otherwise, given the meeting of the *ordo* within and without that memory mediates. A cursory reading of *doctr. chr.* should also weaken this view. Cary (2000, p. 143) argues that, for Augustine, signs (such as sacraments) cannot be efficient means of grace, since they are physical and therefore lesser creatures than the soul. He errs in interpreting this as Aristotelian efficient causality, which is not Augustine's view of how the sacraments are *instrumentally* used by divine grace. See B. Studer, "Sacramentum et exemplum chez saint Augustin", *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975), p. 136, n. 244.

¹⁶ *Trin.* 15.28.51. "Domine Deus meus, una spes mea, exaudi me, ne fatigatus nolim te quaerere, sed quaeram faciem tuam semper ardenter. Tu da quaerendi vires, qui invenire te fecisti, et magis magisque inveniendi te spem dedisti. Coram te est firmitas et infirmitas mea: illam conserva, istam sana. Coram te est scientia et ignorantia mea: ubi mihi aperuisti, suscipe intransigentem; ubi clausisti, aperi pulsanti. Meminerim tui, intelligam te, diligam te. Auge in me ista, donec me reformes ad integrum."

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